

BORDERS, BARRIERS, AND ETHNOGENESIS

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BORDERS, BARRIERS, AND ETHNOGENESIS

Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages

Edited by

Florin Curta



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Introduction

FLORIN CURTA

‘When the river Ister gets close to Dacia, for the first time it clearly forms the boundary between the barbarians, who hold its left bank, and the territory of the Romans, which is on the right.’¹ Procopius’s description of the Danube as a natural and, at the same time, political frontier captures an essential element of imperial self-definition. ‘Roman emperors of former times’, in order to prevent the crossing of the Danube by the barbarians living on the other side, had occupied and fortified the northern bank. Only Justinian made the river ‘the strongest possible line of first defence (*probolon ischyrotaton*)’ in Europe.² Recent scholarship has done little to distinguish Procopius’s personal views from

¹ Procopius, *Buildings* 4.5, ed. by J. Haury, English trans. by H. B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA, 1940), p. 267. For a survey of recent scholarship on Procopius’s *Buildings*, see Denis Roques, ‘Les *Constructions de Justinien* de Procope de Césarée: document ou monument?’, *Comptes rendus de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 4 (1998), 989–1001, and ‘Les *Constructions de Justinien* de Procope de Césarée’, *Antiquité tardive*, 8 (2000), 31–43. Despite the importance of the *Buildings* for any discussion of the Late Roman *limes*, as well as a rich textual evidence in the *Wars* and the *Secret History*, there is virtually no study of Procopius’s concept of frontier. See, however, J.-P. Arrignon and J.-F. Duneau, ‘La frontière chez deux auteurs byzantins: Procope de Césarée et Constantin Porphyrogénète’, in *Geographica Byzantina*, ed. by Hélène Ahrweiler (Paris, 1981), pp. 17–30; Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500–700* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 151–55.

² Procopius, *Buildings* 4.1, ed. by Haury, trans. by Dewing, p. 229. Procopius’s views were by no means unique. Writing in the 630s, Theophylact Simocatta still believed that ‘the barbarians would not remain quiet unless the Romans kept a very strict guard on the Ister’ (*Historia* 6.6.2, ed. by C. de Boor and P. Wirth (Stuttgart, 1972); English translation by M. Whitby and M. Whitby (Oxford, 1986), p. 167).

general stereotypes about frontiers.³ Historians have long followed the latter when treating natural borders, such as the Danube, as ‘moral barriers’ separating civilization from the savage barbarians.⁴ The written evidence of Procopius or Ammianus Marcellinus was taken at face value, with the archaeological evidence confirming in detail the Roman record of defence policy. It is therefore not very surprising that most historians fully trusted archaeologists working in the reputable field of *Limesforschung*. There were, after all, hundreds of frontier forts excavated year after year in Europe, Africa, and the Near East to provide a template for the Maginot Lines of the Roman Empire. There were also several international meetings entirely dedicated to the study of Roman frontiers to provide a wealth of detail about how the *limes* operated. The fundamental problems of ‘text-driven’ archaeology were at times recognized, but early surveys did not challenge the idea that Roman frontiers were political and military barriers. Detailed studies could and still take this approach much further; at various points in time, barriers broke into pieces, each with its own history of utter destruction. Inevitably, however, the strength of emphasis on the military aspects of the frontier tended to restrict the degree of attention to details around and within forts. Furthermore, so much focused on the political dimension of frontiers that the cultural implications of their implementation and demise were often overlooked.

A radical change of attitude came in the late 1980s with vehement attacks on the idea that the Roman *limes* was a frontier line. The ‘frontier-as-barrier’ concept, as expressed by Procopius, was now viewed as a literary construct and an element of propaganda.⁵ Not only did the Roman *limes* cease to be a linear frontier, but the very

³ See, however, Katherine Adshead, ‘Procopius’ Poliorcetica: Continuities and Discontinuities’, in *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Graeme Clark and others (Rushcutters Bay, 1990), pp. 93–119, and Sophie Patoura, ‘Une nouvelle considération de la politique de Justinien envers les peuples du Danube’, *Byzantinoslavica*, 58 (1997), 78–86. See also Javier Arce, ‘Frontiers of the Late Roman Empire: Perceptions and Realities’, in *The Transformation of Frontiers: From Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. by Walter Pohl, Ian Wood, and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden, 2001), pp. 6–13.

⁴ For the Danube and the Rhine, see Nicolae Iorga, ‘Le Danube d’Empire’, in *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger à l’occasion du quatre-vingtième anniversaire de sa naissance*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1924), pp. 13–22; Andreas Alföldi, ‘Die ethische Grenzscheide am römischen Limes’, *Schweizer Beiträge zur allgemeinen Geschichte*, 8 (1950), 37–50, and ‘The Moral Barrier on Rhine and Danube’, in *The Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, 1949* (London, 1952), pp. 1–16. See also Paul Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, vol. II (Paris, 1981), p. 61; Evangelos Chrysos, ‘Die Nordgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches im 6. bis 8. Jahrhundert’, in *Die Völker Südosteuropas im 6. bis 8. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Bernhard Hänsel (Berlin, 1987), pp. 34–37; Gottfried Schramm, *Ein Damm bricht: Die römische Donaugrenze und die Invasionen des 5.–7. Jahrhunderts im Lichte von Namen und Wörtern* (Munich, 1997).

⁵ The idea that barbarians would not dare to cross natural frontiers, such as rivers, except when frozen, is an old topos. See Franz Hornstein, ‘*Istros hamaxeuomenos*: Zur Geschichte eines literarischen Topos’, *Gymnasium*, 64 (1957), 154–61.

idea of frontier as an interface where Romans stood confronting the enemy is now discredited.⁶ Instead of fortified frontiers and Great Wall-like structures erected at the boundaries of civilization, the emphasis is now on the network of roads and their significance for understanding the distribution of forts and other fortified sites along or across natural frontiers. Instead of a linear frontier, the *limes* is now viewed as a deep zone including the supporting provinces and, in some cases, even territories across the frontier.⁷ Forts long considered to be bastions of Roman civilization at the periphery of the Empire are now viewed as loci of central importance for economic, cultural, and even military interaction between 'Romans' and 'barbarians'. Natural barriers separating one world from the other have now become vital arteries of cultural dialogue. No more a sinister 'Tartar steppe' of Buzzatian inspiration, the frontier is currently viewed as a channel of communication and exchange of information between populations living on either side.⁸

Nevertheless a conscious and general shift of emphasis away from the concept of linear frontier had to wait until very recent times.⁹ Despite the growing awareness

⁶ Much of this work of revision was done by Benjamin Isaac, *The Limits of the Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (Oxford, 1992), and C. R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore, 1994). See also D. H. Miller, 'Frontier Societies and the Transition between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages', in *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Ralph W. Mathisen and Hagith S. Sivan (Aldershot, 1996), p. 162. For the meaning of *limes*, see Benjamin Isaac, 'The Meaning of the Terms *Limes* and *Limitanei*', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 78 (1988), 125–47.

⁷ See, for example, Enrico Zanini, 'Confine e frontiera: il limes danubiano nel VI secolo', in *MILION: Studi e ricerche d'arte bizantina* (Rome, 1988), pp. 257–71. For a much later period, but still in relation to the Danube frontier, see Paul Stephenson, 'The Byzantine Frontier at the Lower Danube in the Late Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700–1700*, ed. by Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (New York, 1999), pp. 80–104. For a similar approach to a different frontier, see Catherine Holmes, 'Byzantium's Eastern Frontier in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. by David Abulafia and Nora Berend (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 83–104.

⁸ See A. D. Lee, *Information and Frontiers: Roman Foreign Relations in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1993). For a similar approach, see Matthias Hardt, 'Das Hannoversche Wendland – eine Grenzregion im frühen und hohen Mittelalter', in *Beiträge zur Archäologie und Geschichte Nordostniedersachsens: Berndt Wachter zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. by Wolfgang Jürries (Lüchow, 1991), pp. 155–67; Rasa J. Mazeika, 'Of Cabbages and Knights: Trade and Trade Treaties with the Infidel on the Northern Frontier, 1200–1390', *Journal of Medieval History*, 20 (1994), 63–76; Ronnie Ellenblum, 'Were There Borders and Borderlines in the Middle Ages? The Example of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem', in *Medieval Frontiers*, ed. by Abulafia and Berend, pp. 105–20. The 'Tartar steppe' is a reference to Dino Buzzati's novel, *Deserto dei Tatai* (translated into English as *Tartar Steppe*, New York, 1952).

⁹ E.g., *Grenzen und Grenzregionen. Frontières et régions frontalières. Borders and Border Regions*, ed. by Wolfgang Haubrichs and Reinhard Schneider (Saarbrücken, 1993); *Frontiers*

that the field is moving into a different direction, archaeologists and historians still gather at international conferences to discuss the implementation or dismantling of one or the other segment of the Roman *limes*.¹⁰ Turner's famous frontier thesis had a great echo among historians of the classical and medieval world,¹¹ but historians of the Middle Ages have only recently come to question the traditional concept of frontier.¹² Similarly, archaeologists working in the period of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages seem to be unaware of parallel changes taking place in their

in *Question*, ed. by Power and Standen; *Transformation of Frontiers*, ed. by Pohl, Wood, and Reimitz; and *Medieval Frontiers*, ed. by Abulafia and Berend. The only notable exception among contributors for the latter volume is one of its editors. Against almost all other papers gathered in the book, she argues that 'on a conceptual level, even if not in a practical institutional sense, the frontiers of the kingdom could be, and in some contexts were, conceived of as linear in the Middle Ages'. See Nora Berend, 'Hungary, "the Gate of Christendom"', in *Medieval Frontiers*, ed. by Abulafia and Berend, p. 201.

¹⁰ See, for example, *Der Limes an der unteren Donau von Diokletian bis Heraklios: Vorträge der internationalen Konferenz, Svištov, Bulgarien (1.–5. September 1998)*, ed. by Gerda von Bülow and Alexandra Milcheva (Sofia, 1999).

¹¹ Medievalists were the first to appropriate Turner's approach. As early as 1913, J. W. Thompson applied the frontier thesis to the study of German medieval frontiers. See J. W. Thompson, 'Profitable Fields of Investigation in Medieval History', *American Historical Review*, 28 (1913), 490–504; Archibald Lewis, 'The Closing of the Mediaeval Frontier, 1250–1350', *Speculum*, 33 (1958), 475–83. The most remarkable application of a fundamentally Turnerian approach in recent studies is Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (Princeton, 1993). For Roman frontiers, see Stephen L. Dyson, 'The Role of Comparative Frontier Studies in Understanding the Roman Frontier', in *Actes du IX^e Congrès international d'études sur les frontières romaines, Mamaia 6–13 sept. 1972*, ed. by D. M. Pippidi (Bucharest, 1974), pp. 277–83; Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*. By contrast, historians of Byzantium were slow in responding to this challenge, but the situation is rapidly changing. See Theodore Papadopoulos, 'The Byzantine Model in Frontier History: A Comparative Approach', in *Actes du XIV^e Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest 6–12 septembre 1971*, ed. by Mihai Berza and Eugen Stănescu, vol. II (Bucharest, 1975), pp. 415–19; Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204* (Cambridge, 2000). I am not aware of any attempt to apply Turner's frontier thesis to the history of Islam.

¹² Reinhard Schneider, 'Lineare Grenzen – vom frühen bis zum späten Mittelalter', in *Grenzen und Grenzregionen*, ed. by Haubrichs and Schneider, pp. 51–68; John F. Drinkwater, '"The Germanic Threat on the Rhine Frontier": A Romano-Gallic Artefact?', in *Shifting Frontiers*, ed. by Mathisen and Sivan, pp. 20–30; Nora Berend, 'Medievalists and the Notion of the Frontier', *Medieval History Journal*, 2 (1999), 54–72; David Abulafia, 'Introduction: Seven Types of Ambiguity, c. 1100–c. 1500', in *Medieval Frontiers*, ed. by Abulafia and Berend, pp. 1–34. See also Walter Pohl, 'Soziale Grenzen und Spielräume der Macht', in *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Vienna, 2000), pp. 11–18, and 'Frontiers in Lombard Italy: The Laws of Ratchis and Aistulf', in *Transformation of Frontiers*, ed. by Pohl, Wood, and Reimitz, pp. 117–41.

discipline.¹³ The social and cultural construction of (political) frontiers remains outside the current focus of post-processualist archaeology, despite the significance of borders for the representation of power, one of the most popular topics with archaeologists interested in symbols and ideology.¹⁴ Conversely, historians of the early Middle Ages have only recently developed an interest in the political manipulation of cultural difference across state frontiers.¹⁵ One of the most fascinating aspects of the current state of research is the study of political frontiers as key elements in the *creation*, as opposed to *separation*, of ethnic groups. Recent work on the relation between monastic communities and political frontiers has shown the great potential of such studies for an exploration of frontier symbolism.¹⁶

¹³ Stanton W. Green and Stephen M. Perlman, 'Frontiers, Boundaries, and Open Social Systems', in *The Archaeology of Frontiers and Boundaries*, ed. by S. W. Green and S. M. Perlman (Orlando, 1985), pp. 3–13; Kent G. Lightfoot and Antoinette Martinez, 'Frontiers and Boundaries in Archaeological Perspective', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24 (1995), 471–92. See also the interesting comments of Bonnie Urciuoli, 'Language and Borders', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24 (1995), 525–46.

¹⁴ See Ian Hodder, *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology* (Cambridge, 1991).

¹⁵ Willem J. H. Willems, 'Rome and its Frontier in the North: The Role of the Periphery', in *The Birth of Europe: Archaeology and Social Development in the First Millennium A.D.*, ed. by Klavs Randsborg (Rome, 1989), pp. 33–45; David Chappell, 'Ethnogenesis and Frontiers', *Journal of World History*, 4 (1993), 267–75; David Harry Miller, 'Ethnogenesis and Religious Revitalization beyond the Roman Frontier: The Case of Frankish Origins', *Journal of World History*, 4 (1993), 277–85; David Olster, 'From Periphery to Center: The Transformation of Late Roman Self-Definition in the Seventh Century', in *Shifting Frontiers*, ed. by Mathisen and Sivan, pp. 93–101; Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, pp. 335–50; Ian Wood, 'Missionaries and the Christian Frontier', in *Transformation of Frontiers*, ed. by Pohl, Wood, and Reimitz, pp. 209–18.

¹⁶ For Spain, an early attempt to link frontiers and the monastic movement was made by Charles Julian Bishko, 'Salvus of Albelda and Frontier Monasticism in Tenth-Century Navarre', *Speculum*, 23.4 (1948), 559–90. See, more recently, Luis Miguel Villar García, *La Extremadura castellano-leonesa: Guerreros, clérigos y campesinos (711–1252)* (Valladolid, 1986), pp. 59–61; Agustín Azkarate Garai-Olaun, *Arqueología cristiana de la Antigüedad Tardía en Alava, Guipúzcoa y Vizcaya* (Vitoria, 1988), pp. 492–97; Thomas F. Glick, *From Muslim Fortress to Christian Castle: Social and Cultural Change in Medieval Spain* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 113–14; Manuel Riu, 'Testimonios arqueológicos sobre poblamiento del Valle del Duero', in *Despoblación y colonización del valle del Duero, siglos VIII–XX* (Ávila, 1995), pp. 93–96. See also Eduardo Manzano Moreno, *La frontera de al-Andalus en época de los Omeyas* (Madrid, 1991). For the Byzantine frontier in Cappadocia and the cave monastery phenomenon, see Nicolas Oikonomides, 'L'organisation de la frontière orientale de Byzance aux X^e–XI^e siècles et le taktikon de l'Escorial', in *Actes du XIV^e Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest 6–12 septembre 1971*, ed. by Mihai Berza and Eugen Stănescu, vol. 1 (Bucharest, 1974), pp. 285–302. See, more recently, Nicole Thierry, 'De la datation des églises de Cappadoce', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 88.2 (1995), 419–53; Mark Whittow, *The Making of Byzantium, 600–1025* (Berkeley, 1996), pp. 337–38. For Bulgaria,

The idea of the present volume grew out of the realization that there was a great deal of new work being done in this new direction which deserved a wider audience. This was true both of studies of late antique frontiers and of more recent research on medieval frontier societies. There were, of course, many opportunities for scholars working in such diverse fields to share information and ideas, most notably two sessions organized for the 36th International Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo) in May 2001. Both sessions, entitled '*Limes, thaghr, and kleisoura*: Fortified Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages', gathered scholars from various countries interested in the examination of the evidence of forts in the light of Isaac's and Whittaker's revisions of the concept of linear frontier. An approach to the American Historical Association to see whether there would be any interest in hosting two sessions on medieval frontiers at the 116th annual meeting in San Francisco (January 2002) met with an enthusiastic response. One session was entitled 'Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers and Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages'; its goal was to bring to the fore the new emphasis on the role of political barriers in the construction of ethnic identities. The other session, entitled 'Overlapping Frontiers: Religion and Ethnicity in the Middle Ages', addressed problems of religious and ethnic identity in relation to frontiers. Most articles published here are in fact expanded versions of the papers presented in these four conference sessions. As it now stands, the volume examines specific aspects of the political and cultural construction of frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, with particular reference to fortifications and ethnicity and the diverse ways in which these aspects were approached in historiography. The considerable amount of data that is now available, as well as the diversity of chronological and geographic concentrations of the papers generously offered by contributors, convinced the editor of the importance of formulating, if not guidelines, then at least some key questions to be addressed by every author in one way or another. What is the significance of excavated forts and fortifications for the new interpretation of late Roman and medieval frontiers? What were the implications of the contacts established across these frontiers for processes of ethnic formation? How is the process of cultural polarization, which is typically associated with ethnic boundaries, reflected in the surviving material and documentary evidence of frontier regions? Above all, this volume's aim is therefore to open up an interdisciplinary and comparative dialogue in the study of frontiers, and the included chapters examine the documentary and archaeological evidence in an attempt to assess the relative importance of each in understanding the

see Rosina Kostova, 'Topography of Three Early Medieval Monasteries in Bulgaria and the Reasons for their Foundation: A Case of Study', *Archaeologia Bulgarica*, 2 (1998), 108–25; Florin Curta, 'The Cave and the Dyke: A Rock Monastery on the Tenth-Century Frontier of Bulgaria', *Studia monastica*, 41 (1999), 129–49. For religious frontiers, see also Helmut Reimitz's interesting remarks in his 'Conversion and Control: The Establishment of Liturgical Frontiers in Carolingian Pannonia', in *Transformation of Frontiers*, ed. by Pohl, Wood, and Reimitz, pp. 189–208.

construction of cultural identity and the process of political mobilization responsible for the rise of state frontiers.

Frontiers and Forts

Traditionally, there has been far greater attention paid to Roman than to any other frontiers in Late Antiquity or the early Middle Ages. Paradoxically, specific developments in the Byzantine and Muslim world have long been known, but the model of *thagr* and *kleisoura* was never taken into consideration in the current debate surrounding the concept of linear frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.¹⁷ Comparative work is much needed in the context of the growing interest in the symbolic aspects of early medieval frontiers. Moreover, scholars studying the origins of the Byzantine and early Islamic frontiers typically leave the issue of Late Roman precedents outside discussion. More attention to non-military aspects is clearly required, and this will help elucidate the striking parallels between Late Roman and early medieval frontiers, which are discussed in the first part of this volume. For example, one important factor in the rise of early Byzantine *kleisourai* was, as Ralph-Johannes Lilie suggests, the seasonal and localized character of military confrontations, which shifted the emphasis from large fortifications to small, key regions, such as mountain passes, with only a limited degree of fortification. Similarly, in the papers of both Joachim Henning and Matthias Hardt raiding and petty warfare of a kind described in ninth- and tenth-century sources for the eastern frontier of the Carolingian and Ottonian Empires is given much importance in the creation of specific forms of circular fortifications. The role of small forts arresting access to the main river valleys across the Taurus range of mountains is also central to Sara Nur Yildiz's study of the Seljuk-Cilician frontier in the 1200s. Within the same region that constitutes Lilie's main research focus, but at a distance of four to six centuries, Yildiz's frontier may be defined as 'a network of fortresses strategically located on high promontories at the entrance into river valleys, thus controlling passage to and from the narrow strip of land along river banks'. Following the Mongol invasion, the frontier between the Seljuks and the Cilician Armenians became dominated by the Karamanid Turks and their Turkmen followers. The rise to power of the Karamanids and their aggressive policies against both the Mongol-backed Seljuk and the Armenian Cilician polities cannot be understood without control of the network of small forts on the frontier.

Some frontiers, however, were comparatively much more prominent in the landscape. The role of linear, fortified frontiers in the rise of medieval states in Europe

¹⁷ See, however, John F. Haldon and H. Kennedy, 'The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Military Organization and Society in the Borderlands', *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta*, 19 (1980), 79–116; Michael David Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, 1996).

has been the subject of much discussion in recent scholarship,¹⁸ and is illustrated in this volume by Rasho Rashev's study of the early medieval fortified frontiers of Bulgaria. The shift from earth-and-timber to stone fortifications both in linear and more or less circular form points to structural changes taking place in the administration of the state following the conversion to Christianity in the late ninth century. By contrast, Paolo Squatriti shows that the building of fortified frontiers not so much served a military purpose of defence, as it was a form of self-assertion. In early medieval Bulgaria, building dikes was integral to the assertion of the authority of the ruler. Moreover, shortly after construction, the giant ditches across Dobrudja served royal purposes, for they allowed rulers 'to exercise power over the bodies of those whom they ruled by having them handle the soil'.

Frontiers and Ethnicity

It is perhaps for their role as barriers against barbarians that Late Roman and early Byzantine frontiers have been most studied. Rewriting the history of these frontiers in the light of recent debates raises a number of significant questions for the equally recent revival of interest in processes of ethnic formation. As Michael Kulikowski shows, Visigothic rulers and Church leaders in Spain had inherited Roman concepts of territory, among them the regional units into which the Romans had divided Spain. On top of these lines was overlaid a series of political barriers created in the course of a diverse political history that pitted Gothic kings, imperial generals, Suevic chieftains, and post-Roman strongmen against each other. Different people defined different borders in different ways, and the frontiers they drew by means of that definition reflected not just political realities, but also political and ecclesiastical aspirations. Understanding those definitions and the way in which people used and crossed the borders thus defined is vital to understanding the historical life of early medieval Spain. This is also true for Sassanian Persia that concerns Touraj Daryaee in his examination of the realignment of Zoroastrian concepts to imperial policies of the third to sixth centuries. Much like Kulikowski, Daryaee concludes that 'different religious communities had different notions of ethnicity in relation to *ēr* and the frontiers of *Ērānšahr*'.

The frontiers of the Late Roman Empire are at the centre of three papers by Sebastian Brather, Florin Curta, and Eugen Teodor. Brather argues that the permanent renegotiation of the first- to fifth-century frontiers in the north-western borderlands of the Empire led to the creation of a 'frontier culture' that is ultimately responsible, on the one hand, for the political prominence of Germanic chiefs who were strong enough to offer their alliance to the Romans and, on the other hand, for

¹⁸ Perhaps the staunchest position in that respect is that of Nora Berend, 'Hungary, "the Gate of Christendom"', esp. pp. 199–200, with a discussion of artificial obstacles (*indagines regni, gyepű*) erected on the frontier.

the peculiar combination of Germanic and Roman lifestyles that was the basic form of expression for the political aspirations of these new elites. At the same time, Roman interventions in barbarian affairs beyond the frontier ‘fostered, induced, and interrupted’ the coagulation of ethnic groups reflected in the multitude of ethnic names that appear in written sources, in themselves an indication of the volatile political situation responsible for what Brather aptly describes as ‘frontier ethno-genetic processes’. Curta’s thesis is in many ways similar, although he deals with a different frontier of the Empire. Emperor Justinian’s response to the military and economic problems of the Danube frontier was an impressive plan of fortification, of a size and quality the Balkans never witnessed before. The interruption of any relations between communities living north and south of the Danube, which is clearly reflected in the numismatic evidence, increased the level of social competition and encouraged the rise of leaders whose basis of power was now warfare. Comparing the fourth- to the sixth-century frontier on the Lower Danube, Curta demonstrates that during periods of conflict and ‘closure’ one can see the first signs of ‘emblemic styles’ in the material culture changes that could arguably represent some form of group identity. Since material culture may have been used for the construction of ethnicity, political and military mobilization associated with the process of ethnic formation must be seen as a response to the historical conditions created by the implementation of the fortified frontier on the Danube. The early Byzantine frontier on the Lower Danube thus played a fundamental role in the creation of new ethnic groups. By contrast, Eugen Teodor insists that what separated the Roman armies from the Sclavenes ‘was not the Danube, but a vast swamp, neither water nor land’. The archaeological evidence points to a very complex picture of isolated communities, each one with its own traditions of pottery production. ‘Emblemic style’ is not the isochrestic variation underpinning every aspect of material culture. Instead, it shows up in selective items with a comparatively large potential for conspicuous consumption and displays of power symbols.

Throughout this book it becomes apparent that a re-evaluation of late antique and medieval frontiers in relation to fortifications and ethnicity is now possible on the basis of new data and new questions. It is also clear that frontiers represent both a challenge to medievalists interested in religious and ethnic identities and a topic with unique potential for comparative work. By bringing together a variety of specialists in a single volume, I hope to have taken steps towards restoring the military and political dimensions to the recent discussion of frontiers too long preoccupied with mainly social and cultural aspects.

Part 1

Frontiers, Forts, and Fortifications

The Byzantine-Arab Borderland from the Seventh to the Ninth Century

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Until the early seventh century Northern Mesopotamia and Syria were part of the eastern provinces of the Empire. No 'natural' borderline existed between Byzantium, on the one side, and Sassanians and Arabs, on the other.¹ During the 630s the Muslim Arabs were successful in conquering the whole of Syria and also attacked Sassanian Persia, which they eventually conquered in the 640s.² When the victory of the Arabs in Syria and Palestine was all too obvious, the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, who had quartered at Antioch to organize the defence, decided to withdraw his troops from Syria to Asia Minor over the Taurus Mountains.³ From the chronicle of Michael the Syrian we learn that Heraclius ordered one of his generals to defend a place in Cilicia named 'Calisura' against any Arab attempts to move beyond that point.⁴ *Calisura* is not the name of any particular town or fortress, for in Greek *kleisoura* describes in fact a small, sometimes fortified boundary district. In Byzantium, a *kleisoura* was nothing new. *Kleisourai* had been in existence long

¹ For the eastern border of Byzantium, see Ernest Honigmann, *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches von 363 bis 1071 nach griechischen, arabischen, syrischen und armenischen Quellen*, Corpus Bruxellense Historiae Byzantinae, 3 (Brussels, 1935). For a general survey, see Pierre Goubert, *Byzance avant l'Islam*, 3 vols (Paris, 1951–65).

² For the first Islamic attacks on Byzantium, see now Walter E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquest* (Cambridge, 1995).

³ See Walter E. Kaegi, 'Heraklios and the Arabs', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 27 (1982), 109–33.

⁴ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)*, ed. by J. B. Chabot, vol. II (Paris, 1902), pp. 422–23.

before the 600s. Such boundary districts are mentioned by Procopius in the mid-sixth century as having been in existence in the Balkans and in other regions.⁵

Fortunately, it is possible to locate the *kleisoura* mentioned by Michael the Syrian. There were in fact only two land routes from Syria to Asia Minor over the Taurus Mountains that may have been used for moving large armies. One of them led to the north-west and crossed the so-called Cilician Gates near Adata, whereas the second route passed along Melitene (today Malatya) and headed to the east. When Heraclius withdrew from Antioch he must have marched along the route leading to the Cilician Gates, and we may safely conclude that this was the area where our *kleisoura* was located.⁶

For more than two centuries the Taurus Mountains marked the frontier between the Caliphate and Byzantium. They formed a natural border which corresponded exactly to the Taurus's ridges and which was protected on both sides by border guards, fortresses, and fortified towns.

Since the Taurus range is a natural barrier between Asia Minor and the plains of Mesopotamia and Northern Syria it has served as frontier ever since antiquity. Today it forms the border between Turkey on one hand and Syria and Iraq on the other. Whoever ruled these territories also had control of the invasion routes leading into Asia Minor and was in turn able to invade quickly Syria and Mesopotamia. It was in these areas that Byzantines and Arabs fought against each other for more than three centuries until Byzantium finally succeeded in gaining the upper hand and Byzantine troops again pushed their way forward into Northern Syria.⁷

Let us have a look at the organization of this border. In order to do so, it is necessary first to understand the military organization of the Empire. To put it in a nutshell: in order to cope with the militarily superior forces of the Arabs, the Byzantines adopted a purely defensive strategy. Whenever possible, they avoided pitched battles in the field and instead chose to lay waste the countryside and to ambush small or isolated enemy forces. This form of warfare could best be described as guerrilla. In

⁵ See Jadran Ferluga, 'Le clisure bizantine in Asia Minore', *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta*, 16 (1975), 9–23.

⁶ For the Cilician Gates, see *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by A. Kazhdan, A.-M. Talbot, A. Cutler, T. E. Gregory, and N. P. Ševčenko (New York, 1991), p. 464; F. Hild and M. Restle, *Kappadokien (Kappadokia, Charsianon, Sebasteia und Lykandos)*, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, 2 (Vienna, 1981), pp. 263–64.

⁷ For a general overview of the seventh- and eighth-century history, see Ralph J. Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber: Studien zur Strukturwandlung des byzantinischen Staates im 7. und 8. Jhd.*, *Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia*, 25 (Munich, 1976). For the ninth and tenth centuries, see A. A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, 3 vols (Brussels, 1935–50). For the tenth and eleventh centuries, see W. Felix, *Byzanz und die islamische Welt im früheren 11. Jahrhundert*, *Byzantina Vindobonensia*, 14 (Vienna, 1981).

addition, the Byzantines fortified most of the towns in Asia Minor, while building many castles where the rural population could find refuge in case of attack.⁸

As a consequence, it was impractical, if not impossible, for the Byzantines to concentrate large military forces in the borderland. In all other respects, the administrative system of the borderland was rather similar to the general Byzantine provincial government in Asia Minor.⁹ Under such circumstances, it became unprofitable to sustain any economic development in a region under constant threat of invasion, especially during harvest time, when raiders often devastated fields and orchards, captured entire herds of cattle, and killed or displaced entire groups of rural population. Following the conquest of 708, inhabitants of Tyana, for instance, were enslaved by the Arabs and forced to resettle in distant areas inside the Caliphate. The same is true for the population of other towns and villages.¹⁰

Because of continuous raids and of the losses and damages associated with them, there were no real conditions for economic growth. Commerce was a risky business as well. And who would build houses in a region permanently exposed to attacks? The population of the borderland survived with great difficulty. Those who chose to stay had to face incessant raids. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that many chose to leave for a safer haven. When unable to withstand any more the continuous attacks of the enemy, the inhabitants of Sision, for example, decided to abandon their town in 711 and fled to the interior of Asia Minor.¹¹ However, the well-known underground settlements of Cappadocia suggest that there was more than one way to cope with hostile attacks and that in certain areas the landscape itself offered reliable solutions.¹²

Throughout the eighth century the Byzantine government in Constantinople encouraged such developments. Emperor Constantine V undertook several expeditions

⁸ See Ralph J. Lilie, 'Araber und Themen: Zum Einfluß der arabischen Expansion auf die byzantinische Militärorganisation', in *The Byzantine and Islamic Near East*, vol. III: *States, Resources, Armies*, ed. by A. Cameron (Princeton, 1995), pp. 425–60. For warfare in general, see John Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World 565–1204* (London, 1999).

⁹ J. F. Haldon and H. Kennedy, 'The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Military Organisation and Society in the Borderlands', *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta*, 19 (1980), 79–116.

¹⁰ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. by C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), pp. 376–77; English translation by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997), pp. 525–26. See also Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion*, pp. 116–17.

¹¹ *The Origins of the Islamic State Being a Translation from the Arabic Accompanied with Annotations, Geographic and Historic Notes of the Kitâb futûh al-buldân of al-Imâm abu-l-'Abbâs Ahmad ibn Jâbir al-Balâdhuri*, ed. by Ph. K. Hitti (New York, 1916; repr., Beirut, 1966), p. 262. See also Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion*, p. 119.

¹² *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Kazhdan and others, p. 379. For Cappadocia in general, see Hild and Restle, *Kappadokien*, esp. p. 316. For underground settlements, see also Robert Ousterhout, 'Survey of the Byzantine Settlement at Çanlı Kilise in Cappadocia: Results of the 1995 and 1996 Seasons', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 51 (1997), 301–06.

to the Arab borderland and transferred its population into Thrace. Constantine did not aim at conquering Arab towns on the frontier and turning them into Byzantine ones. Instead, he destroyed them, moved the population away, and resettled those people in the European provinces of the Empire.¹³ The result of such activities was the creation of a no man's land between Byzantium and the Caliphate. Smaller military units did not easily manage to cross this strip of land, because troops could not rely on support from locals or on local supplies of food and equipment. Whenever invading troops had to carry the necessary supplies with them, their movements were considerably slowed down. The Byzantines, who naturally had spies, scouts, and informants along the borders, thus had more time to organize the defence in the hinterland. Beginning with the second half of the eighth century, a broad no man's land separated the two empires, in which few people lived and only few fortified towns and castles existed.¹⁴

Let us now take into consideration the consequences of this development. The boundary between Byzantium and the Caliphate was not just a boundary between two empires, but also a frontier between the spheres of influence of two religions. Was there any communication between Muslims and Christians in the borderlands, or did the boundary between the two political powers completely separate them?¹⁵ No boundary is impenetrable. Chroniclers tell us about armies crossing boundaries in order to attack the hinterland, embassies going through, and official meetings between representatives of both empires taking place on the border. During the ninth century, for example, Byzantium and the Caliphate often exchanged prisoners and some of these exchanges took place on the river Lamos in Cilicia.¹⁶ It is also worth looking at means of communication other than such 'official' contacts.

This problem is rather difficult to tackle, because of the scarcity of information available in contemporary sources. In addition, there are several questions of interpretation raised by authors writing at a considerable distance, in both time and space, from the events narrated. For example, the governor of the province of Mesopotamia is said to have earned in the 800s no less than twenty pounds of gold, a salary that supposedly did not come from the imperial treasury, but derived from the local *kommerkion*, a custom duty amounting to between twenty and fifty per cent ad valorem. From that, some have drawn the conclusion that a flourishing commerce was in existence at the time in the province of Mesopotamia. In reality, the author of this text repeated an administrative decree of the 400s or early 500s. This, therefore, is no

¹³ Hans Ditten, *Ethnische Verschiebungen zwischen der Balkanhalbinsel und Kleinasien vom Ende des 6. bis zur zweiten Hälfte des 9. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1992), pp. 177–91.

¹⁴ Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion*, p. 337 (map).

¹⁵ Still useful in this respect is H. A. R. Gibb, 'Arab-Byzantine Relations under the Umayyad Caliphate', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 12 (1958), 219–33. See also Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion*, pp. 266–85.

¹⁶ See Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, 1 (1935), 198–204 and 222–26.

more than yet another example of deliberate anachronism meant to illustrate the excellent education of the author. It would be a gross mistake to derive any conclusions from this text about the salary of the provincial governor of Mesopotamia during the ninth century.¹⁷

For one simple reason, intensive traffic across the borderland between Byzantium and the Caliphate was rather unlikely: sea trade routes were preferred over land routes. Both Byzantium and the Caliphate had good harbours and large commercial fleets at their disposal, and most merchandise moved by water. There is no doubt that caravans did not have a great importance in those days. Things changed, however, with the collapse of the Caliphate, as it became more difficult for merchants to travel across the Mediterranean to the ports of Northern Syria.

We have seen that parts of the borderland population either migrated voluntarily to other regions of the Byzantine Empire, or were enslaved or moved forcefully. Nevertheless, the borderland was by no means deserted. The central government was not able to control the borderland as efficiently as provinces in the interior of the Byzantine Empire. This weakness obviously motivated others to seek their fortunes there.

During the seventh and eighth centuries the Paulician sect emerged in Byzantium, only to spread much later to Western Europe where its members would become known as Cathars. When Paulicians were persecuted by the Byzantine government, they fled to the Muslim borderland. The Caliph allowed them to have the cities of Tephrike and Argaun near Melitene. From this part of the border region under Arab control, Paulicians organized repeated attacks against Byzantine positions in Asia Minor.¹⁸

During the last quarter of the seventh century the Byzantines supported the Mardaites, a small tribe living in the Amanos and Lebanon mountains. As the Mardaites proved to be rather dangerous for the Arabs, the Caliph made a special point at the peace negotiations with Byzantium by requesting their withdrawal deep into Byzantine territory. He nevertheless agreed to pay tribute to the Emperor.¹⁹

Owing to the political and military strength of the Caliphate and its ability to control the Muslim borderland towards Byzantium during the seventh and eighth centuries, the tribe of the Mardaites remained an exception. During the ninth century,

¹⁷ W. Brandes, 'Überlegungen zur Vorgeschichte des Thema Mesopotamien: Das Siegel eines "strategos Mesopotamias" aus dem Anfang des 9. Jahrhunderts (Zacos-Veglery, Nr. 284)', *Byzantinoslavica*, 44 (1983), 171–77.

¹⁸ Paul Lemerle, 'L'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie mineure d'après les sources grecques', *Travaux et mémoires du Centre de recherches d'histoire et civilisation byzantines*, 5 (1970), 1–144. For Paulicianism and Cathars, see M. Loos, *Dualist Heresy in the Middle Ages* (Prague, 1974).

¹⁹ Franz Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches von 565–1453*, vol. 1: *Regesten von 565–1025* (Munich, 1924), pp. 253 and 257; A. Kaplony, *Konstantinopel und Damaskus: Gesandtschaften und Verträge zwischen Kaisern und Kalifen 639–750. Untersuchungen zum Gewohnheits-Völkerrecht und zur interkulturellen Diplomatie* (Berlin, 1996), pp. 99–165. For the Mardaites, see Ditten, *Ethnische Verschiebungen*, pp. 138–58.

however, with the Caliphate troubled by frequent uprisings and civil wars and the decline of caliphal power, lesser lords were offered the opportunity to become independent. In the Byzantine and Arab borderlands, smaller polities of both Christians and Muslims came into existence, all governed by warlords who managed to balance the contrasting influences of their two great neighbours, Byzantium and the Caliphate. The principalities of Tarsos and Melitene, later on the principality of Aleppo, were within the area controlled by the Caliphate, whereas the Armenian and Georgian principalities of the Caucasus region were under Byzantine influence, if not control. Although each one of them was too small to turn into a serious threat, they all were strong enough to escape control. Neither Caliphs nor Byzantine emperors could beat those princes into submission.²⁰

The political instability of the borderlands appealed to a different kind of people, namely robbers, adventurers, and soldiers of fortune. This is the world of the Byzantine epic *Digenis Akritas*.²¹ The *akritai* lived on the *akrai*, that is, on the border. Although they nominally accepted the overlordship of the emperor, they were not willing to concede to him any real power over themselves. *Akritai* were ruling landlords within the borderland where the emperor's command was accepted only when he was present and accompanied by a large army. One particularly important episode in the epic cycle is the encounter between the main hero, Digenis, on the one hand, and the emperor on the other, both depicted as of equal rank. Although the account of this meeting cannot be treated as anything more than fiction, it does illustrate the concept of freedom cherished by many who lived in the borderland between Muslim and Christian territories during this period.²²

On the other hand, it is perhaps less surprising that religious differences were not that important in the borderlands. The heroes of *Digenis Akritas* fight against Muslims without being driven by religious fanaticism. Fraternization took place, and Muslims and Christians did sometimes intermarry. Digenis himself, as his name shows, was born from such a mixed family, the offspring of two peoples, Arabs and Byzantines. It goes without saying that by epic standards, Muslims were always religiously wrong; yet they were viewed as nothing less than human beings.

²⁰ For Christian Caucasus, see G. Toumanoff, 'Christian Caucasia between Byzantium and Iran: New Light from Old Sources', *Traditio*, 10 (1954), 109–89. For the Bagratides, see also G. Toumanoff, 'The Bagratids of Iberia from the 8th to the 11th Century', *Le Muséon*, 74 (1961), 5–42. For Melitene, see Hild and Restle, *Kappadokien*, pp. 233–37. For Tarsos, see *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Kazhdan and others, p. 2013; F. Hild and H. Hellenkemper, *Kilikien und Isaurien*, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, 5 (Vienna, 1990), pp. 428–39.

²¹ *Basileios Digenes Akritas*, ed. and trans. by S. Alexiou (Athens, 1985). See also H.-G. Beck, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Volksliteratur* (Munich, 1971), pp. 63–97; *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Kazhdan and others, pp. 622–23.

²² See N. Oikonomides, 'L' "épopée" de Digénis et la frontière orientale de Byzance aux x^e et xi^e siècles', *Travaux et mémoires du Centre de recherches d'histoire et civilisation byzantines*, 7 (1979), 375–97.

The lack of religious fanaticism may be the result of Islamic policies during this period. Caliphs had no intention to turn their Christian subjects into devout Muslims, for they expected them to accept their authority as Caliphs and to pay taxes that were much higher than those demanded from the Caliph's Muslim subjects. Many Christians were still living in Northern Syria after the Arab conquest. In some provinces of the Caliphate they even formed the majority of the population, and the Caliphs wanted them to stay in order to prevent depopulation.²³

Although some full-size campaigns were inspired by a certain religious zeal, in everyday life religious differences were rather unimportant. Let us consider in this context the life of St Antonius the Younger, who lived in Byzantium during the ninth century. A detailed hagiographical account of his life has come down to us. When he was in his twenties, long before his conversion to monastic life, Antonius acted as commanding officer of the seaside town of Attaleia in south-west Asia Minor. When during the 820s Attaleia was attacked by a Muslim naval force from Syria, Antonius started negotiations with the Arab admiral reproaching him that he would attack Attaleia unjustly, without being offended by its inhabitants, and foresaying that he, in case of victory, could not expect much booty or glory. The Arab admiral responded that Byzantine attacks on Syria had caused his campaign. 'You yourself did force us when you sent out your soldiers for raid and when they looted the whole coasts of Syria.' To this, Antonius replied: 'The emperor of the Romans commands his officers, what he wants, and they have to do it. And he sends out fleets and armies against all who act against his power, without any consideration whether we agree to that or not.' Then Antonius offered tribute and donations if the Arabs showed mercy to Attaleia. In the end, the Arabs agreed and departed without attacking the town.²⁴

Although the Life of St Antonius the Younger is a hagiographical text the vertical difference appears clearly as much more important than the religious conflict. The powerful fought each other, and their subjects had to follow them, willingly or unwillingly. The text is remarkable by the absence of any feelings similar to those driving the crusade or the jihad. On the contrary, everyone wished to live in peace. We may assume that this was also what the population of the border regions wished, whether they were Muslims or Christians. Muslims and Christians preferred to live in peace with each other side by side, but the inhabitants of the borderlands in general were not strong enough to act on their own and to do what they wanted.

Let us now return to the border region between Byzantium and the Caliphate. Was that a barrier or a bridge or was it perhaps a region with its own customs and rules? In a certain sense, the answer to all three parts of the question is positive and

²³ Ph. K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs from the Earliest Times to the Present*, 10th edn (London, 1970).

²⁴ *Bios kai politeia tou hosiou Antoniou tou Neou*, ed. by A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, in *Sylloge palaistines kai syriakes hagiologias*, vol. I (St-Petersburg, 1907), pp. 198–200.

negative at the same time. This frontier was too porous to be a tight barrier. There were not only armies marching across but also settlements and resettlements, and there was transfer of population to and from the borderland. There were some trade routes, though not many. The development of the border region did not depend on boundaries but on political circumstances. The borderlands gained commercial importance only after the decline of the Caliphate when the states in Mesopotamia and Iran lost direct access to the Mediterranean ports and had to build up new trade routes, for instance those leading to Trebizond on the Black Sea. This, however, only took place after c. 1000. Was then the border between the Caliphate and Byzantium some kind of bridge? The borderland with its mountains, hills, and rivers made communication difficult and had few natural resources to offer. Its hinterland was equally rather poor and, therefore, of no interest for long-distance commerce. For this trade the maritime routes were of much greater importance. As both the Caliphate and Byzantium possessed good ports, trade between Christian Greeks and Muslim Arabs was mostly by sea. The same is true for long-distance trade routes between Western Europe and the Near East. Spices and luxury goods were more often brought to Egypt by ship from the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean than by land from Northern Syria and Mesopotamia. They were re-exported to the West from Egyptian ports. During this period, the so-called silk road was not very important, apart from its more attractive northern part which crossed through the steppe in southern Russia.²⁵

From the seventh to the ninth century the borderland between Byzantium and the Caliphate gained in significance as a mixed area where Christians and Muslims co-existed. Whenever Byzantium and the Caliphate were on equal terms, this region between the two empires became a refuge for persecuted groups, who could stand there as long as they succeeded to play off the great powers against each other.

Furthermore, there are some indications of the existence of a mixed culture — partly Christian, partly Muslim. Unfortunately, the available sources are scarce. In the stories of the Arabian Nights, however, as well as in the epic of *Digenis Akritas*, in the Persian *Shahname*, and in the Turkish epic of Sayyid Battal, we find reminiscences of the interactions taking place in the borderland during the period in question.²⁶

The Christian population — mostly Syriac and Armenian Christians with only a minority of Greeks — remained in the region until the twelfth century. After that, the situation changed dramatically as a consequence of Turkish and Mongol invasions, of the crusades, and of the decline of the Byzantine Empire. Very little after c. 1200

²⁵ For a general overview, see M. F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c. 300–1450* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 561–90. For East–West trade routes before c. 600, see Nina Pigulevskaja, *Byzanz auf den Wegen nach Indien: Aus der Geschichte des byzantinischen Handels mit dem Orient vom 4. bis 6. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1969). For the Silk Road, see H.-W. Haussig, *Die Geschichte Zentralasiens und der Seidenstraße in vorislamischer Zeit* (Darmstadt, 1983); for the seventh and eighth centuries, see Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion*, pp. 266–85.

²⁶ Beck, *Geschichte*, pp. 75–77.

remained the same as during the seventh to ninth centuries. Turks, crusaders, Mongols, and the decline of Byzantium were all responsible for bringing to an end the world of the borderland.²⁷

It is important to approach the early medieval borderland as much more than a region. Life conditions there depended upon general circumstances. For example, the religious status of Muslims within Byzantium during the ninth century was not one of a persecuted group. There was even a mosque in Constantinople, to serve the needs of Muslim merchants. There were Muslim mercenaries in the Byzantine army, while conversions not only of Muslim families but of entire Muslim tribes are clearly documented. The same was true for conditions inside the Caliphate.²⁸ Things began to change with the crusades which provoked more fanaticism in the Muslim world and worsened relations between Muslims and local Christians. This, however, is a later development, clearly associated with the decline of Byzantium, as the borderland between Christians and Muslims became part of the Islamic hinterland, and lost its original character as the eastern frontier of the Byzantine Empire.

²⁷ C. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey: A General Survey of the Material and Spiritual Culture and History, c. 1071–1330* (New York, 1968). See also Sp. Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamicization from the Eleventh to the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1971).

²⁸ See Ralph J. Lilie, 'Byzanz und der Islam: Konfrontation oder Koexistenz?', in *Byzantium and Islam in Scandinavia: Acts of a Symposium at Uppsala University June 15–16 1996*, ed. by E. Piltz (Jonsered, 1998), pp. 13–26.

Civilization versus Barbarians? Fortification Techniques and Politics in the Carolingian and Ottonian Borderlands

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The north-eastern frontier between the Christian Frankish Empire and the pagan Saxons existing in the seventh and eighth centuries until Charlemagne's conquest of Saxony is commonly regarded as a boundary separating the Frankish heirs of the late antique civilized world from the Saxon tribes, whose primitive ways of life epitomize paganism.¹ A similar situation has been postulated for the later frontier at a distance of one hundred years, at the time the Ottonians began pushing the borders of their empire to the east.² By then, the already converted Saxons had become 'civilized', and had begun styling themselves as defenders, if not heirs, of the antique traditions, as they watched over a line of political demarcation, but also of sharp cultural contrast with the Slavs on the other side, whose backwardness and primitive ways of life had meanwhile become the new epitome of stubborn paganism.³

¹ For the seventh- to eighth-century line of fortifications on the Saxon frontier, see Norbert Wand, 'Die Büraburg bei Fritzlar – eine fränkische Reichsburg mit Bischofssitz in Hessen', in *Frühmittelalterlicher Burgenbau in Mittel- und Osteuropa: Tagung, Nitra vom 7. bis 10. Oktober 1996*, ed. by Joachim Henning and Alexander T. Ruttikay (Bonn, 1998), p. 175 with fig. 1.

² For the Elbe-Saale frontier during the ninth and tenth centuries, as well as a map of border fortifications mentioned in the written sources, see Joachim Henning, 'Der slawische Siedlungsraum und die ottonische Expansion östlich der Elbe: Ereignisgeschichte, Archäologie, Dendrochronologie', in *Europa im 10. Jahrhundert: Archäologie einer Aufbruchszeit*, ed. by Joachim Henning (Mainz, 2002), p. 134 with fig. 3.

³ For the historical background, see Matthias Hardt, 'Hesse, Elbe, Saale and the Frontiers of the Carolingian Empire', in *The Transformation of Frontiers: From Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. by Walter Pohl, Ian Wood, and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden, 2001), pp. 219–32; 'Linien und Säume, Zonen und Räume an der Ostgrenze des Reiches im frühen und hohen

However, this picture is nothing else than a stereotype rooted in the militant character of available written sources, all of which were concerned primarily with the struggle against pagans. Recent archaeological studies of Carolingian and Ottonian fortifications from two border areas suggest that the presumably sharp cultural difference marked by frontier lines was not so evident as previously thought. In fact, it became clear that in many ways the situation on the north-eastern and eastern frontier of the Carolingian and Ottonian empires is an early medieval replica of phenomena associated with the frontiers of the Late Roman Empire.⁴ Cultural differences between the core areas of the 'civilized' world, such as the Paris basin or the Rhine lands during the early Middle Ages, and the peripheral regions of Hessa and Bavaria to the east, as well as Brittany to the west, were much more important than contrasts supposedly created by the implementation of frontier lines. The economic and social resources available at that time were not sufficient for supporting cultural uniformity across the entire area under the direct control of the Carolingians or of the Ottonians. On the other hand, and despite the bloody military confrontations taking place in borderlands, political frontiers were not walls separating groups of people, but areas of cultural exchange, a melting pot of cultures, economies, and societies.⁵

All known cases of frontiers, from Late Antiquity to the tenth century, imply the existence of buffer zones, especially in areas where tribal groups existed in close contact with neighbouring empires. In that sense, 'barbarians' existed on both sides of the political frontier,⁶ either as buffer groups on one side (e.g. the so-called Sorabian March on the eastern border of the Carolingian Empire in Thuringia, also known as the *limes Sorabicus*)⁷ or as 'federates' on the other side, watching over frontier fortifications⁸ or just settled as peasants in frontier hinterlands. In both cases,

Mittelalter', in *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Vienna, 2000), pp. 39–56; and 'The *Limes Saxoniae* as Part of the Eastern Borderlands of the Frankish and Ottonian-Salian Empire' (in this volume).

⁴ David Harry Miller, 'Frontier Societies and the Transition between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages', in *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Ralph W. Mathisen and Hagith S. Sivan (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 158–71.

⁵ Hugh Elton, 'Defining Romans, Barbarians, and the Roman Frontier', in *Shifting Frontiers*, ed. by Mathisen and Sivan, pp. 126–35.

⁶ See the studies collected in *Germanen beiderseits des spätantiken Limes*, ed. by Thomas Fischer, Gundolf Precht, and Jaroslav Tejral (Cologne, 1999).

⁷ For the archaeology of this frontier, see Hansjürgen Brachmann, 'Der Limes Sorabicus: Geschichte und Wirkung', *Zeitschrift für Archäologie*, 25 (1991), 177–207; and the written record: Matthias Hardt, 'Limes Sorabicus', in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. by Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, and Heiko Steuer, vol. XVIII (Berlin, 2001), pp. 446–48.

⁸ Peter J. Heather, 'Foedera and foederati of the Fourth Century', in *Kingdoms of the Empire: The Integration of Barbarians in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Walter Pohl (Leiden, 1997), pp. 57–74; Maria Cesa, 'Römisches Heer und barbarische Föderaten: Bemerkungen zur weströmischen Politik in den Jahren 402–412', in *L'armée romaine et les barbares du III^e au VI^e siècle*, ed. by Françoise Vallet and Michel Kazanski (St Germain-des-Près, 1993), pp. 21–29.

there was a strong tendency for 'barbarians' to identify with the policies and culture of the Empire whose interests they served, a process which in turn triggered ethnic changes and assimilation. Immediately after the Frankish military conquest of the border territories between the Lower Elbe and the Wismar Bay, until then controlled by Saxons and Danes, Charlemagne ordered the Slavic Obodrites to move into the region as Frankish 'federates'. Much like their late antique counterparts, the late eighth-century 'federates' were spread over a number of *civitates*, *castella*, and *oppida* in order to defend the frontier of the Empire against Danish raids.⁹ In 789 Charlemagne built *castrae* on the left bank of the Elbe River against the Liones, most likely allies of the Wilzi. According to the *Royal Frankish Annals*, *castella* were also built on the opposite bank, as bridgeheads in foreign territory. One such fort is described in more detail as built of timber and earth ('*ex lingo et terra aedificavit*'). The same is true about the forts erected in 806, after King Charles, Charlemagne's son, crushed the revolt of the Sorabian federates east of the Saale River. According to the Chronicle of Moissac, a monastery in the diocese of Cahors in southern France, Charles gave orders to the Slavic *reges* to build fortifications on the eastern bank of the Elbe and Saale rivers. However, the *Royal Frankish Annals* indicate that the fortifications were erected by the army ('*castella ab exercitu aedificata*'). This seems to suggest that the Sorabian federates had been once again incorporated into the Carolingian *exercitus* of the borderlands.

Only few such Carolingian frontier forts have been identified by archaeological means. The all-mysterious fort built in 808 '*ad aquilonem partem Albiae contra Magadaburg*' and '*iuxta fluvium Albim*' may well be the fortification identified in 2003 during the geophysical survey carried out in the Magdeburg region by a team from the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt. Generations of historians and archaeologists have tried in vain to find the fort underneath a number of stone castles in the hinterland of Magdeburg, but just as described in contemporary sources, the fort was made of timber and earth. According to those accounts, it was visible from Magdeburg, as it watched over the Elbe valley north of that city on the opposite bank of that river. Furthermore, it is said to have been manned by Slavic contingents, and the survey revealed two sunken-featured buildings, each with a stone oven in the corner. Both houses produced ceramic assemblages marked by the presence of handmade pottery similar to the so-called Prague type.

It is possible that the territories east of the *limes Saxoniae* (east of present-day Schleswig) and of the *limes Sorabicus* along the Saale were the first to experience the transfer of cultural elements of Frankish power representation and administrative structures onto the Slavic world. Indeed, it is in these areas that written sources place two rival ethnic groups, the one allied with the Franks (the Obodrites), the other

⁹ *Royal Frankish Annals* a. 808, ed. by Friedrich Kurze (Hannover, 1895; repr., 1930), MGH SS rer. Germ. 6:125; *Chronicle of Moissac* a. 808, ed. by Georg Heinrich Pertz (Hannover, 1826, repr., 1925), MGH SS 1:308.

staunchly opposed to them (the Wilzi).¹⁰ Even groups on the other side of the political frontier that resisted Frankish or Ottonian encroachment, such as the Saxon tribal federation or the burgeoning states of the Western Slavs, were in the end quite willing to imitate the military and defensive techniques, if not also elements of the political structure, of the Empire.¹¹

In the light of recent archaeological studies of early medieval fortifications on the Carolingian and Ottonian borderlands in the north-east, the question of cultural differences across the frontier between Christians and pagans can now be rephrased. Previous studies have been based on the assumption that 'civilization' was to be identified by means of castles built in stone similar to Roman frontier forts, whereas 'barbarians' were associated with ringforts of prehistoric tradition, all built in timber and earth. Thus, scholars studying the Büraburg near Fritzlar in northern Hesse have long imagined the life of the garrison manning the Roman-like stone castle built in the early eighth century in the newly conquered territories east of the Rhine as identical to that of the tenth-century soldiers placed by King Henry I on the German-Slavic borderline on the river Saale (Fig. 1).¹² By contrast, outside the castle and on the other side of the frontier, we are invited to imagine a network of ringworks erected by pagan Saxons. Such forts, widely spread in northern Germany, were first called 'Saxon ringforts' by the German archaeologist Carl Schuchhardt, who consequently dated their origins back to the pre-Carolingian period.¹³

Büraburg is well known from written sources as a site of strategic importance on the Saxon frontier of the Carolingian Empire. St Boniface had called the site an *oppidum*, and Büraburg was one of three bishoprics established as early as 742 in the lands east of the Rhine. It was, however, abandoned a few years later. Small-scale excavations outside the stone rampart on the eastern side of the fortified hill produced a number of pits, hastily interpreted as the remains of a *suburbium* including handicraft workshops and houses of merchants engaged in long-distance trade. Büraburg

¹⁰ Given the close contact between Franks and Slavs in that particular area, it is not impossible to see the all-Slavic word for 'king' (*korol'*/*kral*) deriving from Charlemagne's name as originating from that same region. In any case, the archaeological evidence clearly demonstrates the adoption of Carolingian architectural elements of power representation by local Slavs. See Ingo Gabriel, "Imitatio imperii" am slawischen Fürstenhof zu Starigard/Oldenburg (Holstein): Zur Bedeutung karolingischer Königspaläste für die Herausbildung früher Herrschaftszentren und Burgstädte bei den nordwestlichen Slawen', in *Trudy V Mezhdunarodnogo Kongressa arkheologov-slavistov, Kiev 18–25 sentjabria 1985 g.*, ed. by V. V. Sedov, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1987), pp. 50–66.

¹¹ Peter G. Heather, 'Frankish Imperialism and Slavic Society', in *Origins of Central Europe*, ed. by Przemysław Urbańczyk (Warsaw, 1997), pp. 171–90.

¹² Ralf Gebuhr, 'Burg und Landschaft: Kulturhistorische Untersuchung zur Archäologie frühgeschichtlicher Wehrbauten an Elbe und Elster am Beispiel der Burg auf dem "Grünen Berg" bei Gehren' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Humboldt University, Berlin, 1996).

¹³ Carl Schuchhardt, *Die Burg im Wandel der Weltgeschichte* (Potsdam, 1931), pp. 228–29.



Figure 1. A Roman-like stone castle of the early tenth century
on the German-Slavic frontier on the river Saale.

Romanticized German textbook illustration of the 1930s (after R. Gebuhr).

thus appeared as the first post-Roman early town founded in the region east of the Rhine River, an almost urban settlement without any Roman roots, but with a significant role in spreading the Roman influence to the east. As such, Büraburg would have indeed been an exceptional case for the early 700s, and it is therefore no surprise that the site received much attention from German historians. However, archaeological excavations, geophysical surveys, aerial photography studies and micromorphological soil investigations carried out since 1997 by the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt and sponsored by the Commission of Archaeological Research in Hesse have radically changed that picture (Fig. 2).

It became clear that the assumed *suburbium* of craftsmen and traders on the Büraburg hill was nothing but a figment of scholarly imagination, a result of deliberate misinterpretation of archaeological structures. The relatively numerous features identified outside the ramparts, initially thought to be the remains of the Frankish *suburbium*, are in fact of Neolithic origin. The idea of the earliest Frankish town east of the river Rhine must now be abandoned.¹⁴

¹⁴ For details, see Joachim Henning and Richard I. Macphail, 'Das karolingerzeitliche Oppidum Büraburg: Archäologische und mikromorphologische Studien zur Funktion einer frühmittelalterlichen Bergbefestigung in Nordhessen', in *Parerga Praehistorica: Jubiläumsschrift zur Prähistorischen Archäologie – 15 Jahre UPA*, ed. by Bernhard Hänsel (Bonn, 2004), pp. 221–51.

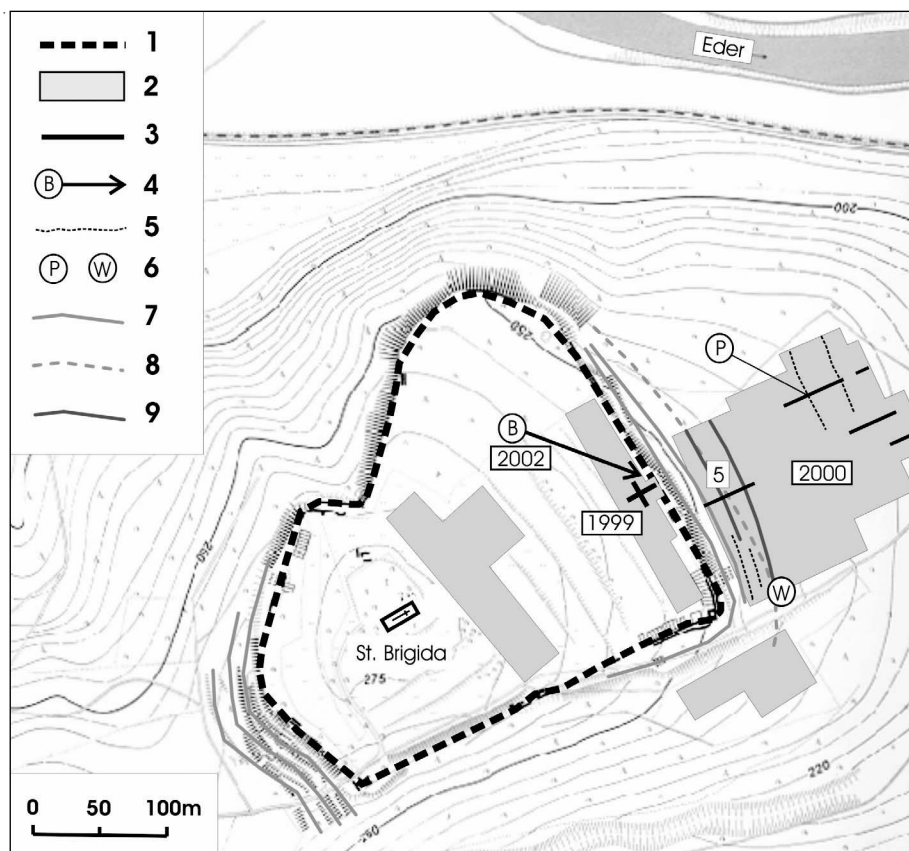


Figure 2. The early medieval fortification on the Bûrburg hill. Field research of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main (1997–2004): 1. stone rampart, 2. area of geophysical sensing, 3. archaeological trenches, 4. area of micromorphological investigation, 5. palisade rows, 6. important discoveries: palisade (P) and Neolithic structures (W), 7. pointed ditches (excavations until 1973), 8. formerly assumed ditch (revised by excavations of 2000), 9. recently reconstructed ditches (excavations of 2000).

Moreover, investigations in the forefield of the stone rampart produced evidence of multiple rows of timber palisades dating to the early Middle Ages. The chronology of these palisades was determined by means of seven radiocarbon datings and is roughly the same as that of multiple rows of pointed ditches that, together with the palisades, form an effective and independent fortification system. It is therefore very probable that the Carolingian occupation of the Bûrburg hill consisted of a simple earth-and-timber fortification. Excavations of the dark-earth deposits behind the stone rampart, which has long been viewed as Carolingian, did not produce clearly

stratified occupation layers but an irregular mixture of Carolingian, Ottonian, and prehistoric finds. The micromorphological analysis of these dark-earth deposits made in the London University College lab¹⁵ has demonstrated their primarily colluvial nature. The depositing of this earth matrix was not the result of occupation activities behind the stone rampart, but of the erosion process that altered the hill slope and brought layers of the dark earth behind the stone rampart. The formation of the colluvium behind the stone rampart, together with a few remains of real, albeit temporary, occupation of the site cannot be dated earlier than the late ninth to early eleventh century, and as such the stone rampart could not have come into being at the time St Boniface established his bishopric in Büraburg on the Frankish-Saxon frontier. The Carolingian fortification of these early times was no more than a simple palisade with a pointed ditch, which was in fact not at all different from Saxon strongholds on the other side of the frontier, but similar in many respects to other contemporary fortifications of Carolingian age in the eastern borderlands (Magdeburg, Halberstadt, Esesfelt).¹⁶

The Büraburg/Fritzlar settlement and fortification complex must have been of some importance until late into the ninth or the early tenth century, perhaps even later. The first king of the Ottonian dynasty, Henry I, was elected in Fritzlar, at the foot of the Büraburg hill. The site was located in the heartland of the Conradine principality, initially the most powerful opponent of the Liudolfings, later their most important ally. The choice of Fritzlar, and of Conradine instead of Liudolfingian territory, for the investiture of Henry I must be seen as an act of great significance for the relation between the two powerful families. It is therefore very unlikely that the Conradines had no control over a fort of such importance throughout the ninth century. Judging from the existing evidence, the Conradine fort was the Büraburg fortification with ramparts of stone bonded with mortar built on top of older structures of Carolingian age.

A similar picture emerges from the evaluation of other fortifications in the frontier region between Franks and Saxons. The *communis opinio* influenced by the older Büraburg interpretation is that on some such sites the stone-mortar ramparts must date back to early Carolingian times. Excavations at Büraburg proved this interpretation to be wrong. At the Christenberg hill near Münchhausen (Middle Hessa),¹⁷ a recent redating to the late ninth or tenth century of three spurs found

¹⁵ Analysis by Richard I. Macphail (report in the archive of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main).

¹⁶ Hansjürgen Brachmann, *Der frühmittelalterliche Befestigungsbau in Mitteleuropa: Untersuchungen zu seiner Entwicklung und Funktion im germanisch-deutschen Bereich* (Berlin, 1993).

¹⁷ Rolf Gensen, 'Christenberg, Burgwald und Amöneburger Becken in der Merowinger- und Karolingerzeit', in *Althessen im Frankenreich*, ed. by Walter Schlesinger (Sigmaringen, 1975), pp. 121–72.

behind the stone-mortar rampart¹⁸ consequently triggered a reinterpretation of the fort. The spurs are very similar to isolated finds from the Büraburg fortification.¹⁹ At Christenberg they were clearly associated with features adjacent to the stone rampart. With the redating of the stone rampart to the late ninth or tenth century, the idea of a Carolingian stone fort in Christenberg becomes as dubious as in Büraburg.

The evidence discussed so far suggests that Frankish hillforts built east of the river Rhine following the Carolingian conquest were not very different from those erected by Saxons on the other side of the frontier. Very similar to this archaic hillfort type were also contemporary Slavic strongholds of the so-called Feldberg type in western Pomerania and in Mecklenburg,²⁰ which in AD 789 had been the target of a large military campaign of Charlemagne. Close to the end of the Saxon wars and following the conversion of most parts of Saxony to Christianity, the Frankish army now moving against the Slavic tribal federation of the Wilzi received reinforcements of Saxon contingents.²¹

The chronology of Schuchhardt's 'Saxon ringforts', which differ considerably from older hillforts in terms of their almost circular plan, limited size, as well as location in wetlands, have also been recently revisited. Results of dendrochronological analysis of timber remains from some of those lowland forts indicate that none was in existence during Charlemagne's lifetime. Consequently, these forts could not have played any role in the Saxon wars of the eighth century. Ringforts of the

¹⁸ For the first mention of a need to redate the Christenberg finds, see Norbert Gossler, 'Mittelalterliches Reitzubehör von hessischen Burgen', in *Burgenforschung in Hessen: Begleitband zur Ausstellung im Marburger Landgrafenschloss vom 1. November 1996 bis 2. Februar 1997*, ed. by Bernhard Schroth (Marburg, 1996), pp. 161–76. For a comprehensive analysis of the Christenberg spurs and stirrup, see Thomas Kind, 'Archäologische Funde von Teilen der Reiterausrüstung aus Europa und ihr Beitrag zur Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte der Ottonenzeit', in *Europa im 10. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Henning, pp. 283–99. The presence of a clear Ottonian phase of occupation at Christenberg has meanwhile been accepted by the excavator of the site; see Rolf Gensen, 'Ein Keramikkomplex mit dem Schlussdatum 753 vom Christenberg, Gde. Münchhausen am Christenberg, Kr. Marburg-Biedenkopf', in *Archäologische Beiträge zur Geschichte Westfalens: Festschrift für Klaus Günther*, ed. by Daniel Bérenger (Rahden, 1997), pp. 219–28. A new analysis of the materials from the Christenberg excavation drew the same conclusion: Andreas Thiedmann, 'Neue Forschungen zum Christenberg bei Münchhausen', *Hessen Archäologie*, 2001 (2002), 126–28.

¹⁹ Norbert Wand, *Die Büraburg bei Fritzlar: Burg – 'oppidum' – Bischofssitz in karolingischer Zeit* (Marburg, 1974).

²⁰ Sebastian Brather, 'Karolingerzeitlicher Befestigungsbau im wilzisch-abodritischen Raum: Die sogenannten Feldberger Höhenburgen', in *Frühmittelalterlicher Burgenbau*, ed. by Henning and Ruttkay, pp. 115–26.

²¹ *Royal Frankish Annals* a. 789, ed. by F. Kurze (Hannover, 1895), MGH SS rer. Germ. 6:84; Einhard, *Vita Caroli Magni*, 12, ed. by Georg Heinrich Pertz (Hannover, 1911; repr., 1927), MGH SS 2:449.

‘developed’, small circular or slightly rectangular, type in Saxon territories only appear around the mid-800s, and their number rapidly increased shortly after AD 900. As such, they regularly appear on both sides of the new frontier between the Ottonian Saxons and their Slavic neighbours.²²

The ninth- and tenth-century ringforts of the North German and Polish lowlands, especially those of Niederlausitz, just south of Berlin, and of Mazovia, have been the subject of a long-term research project of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University. The careful study of building and fortification techniques already suggests that no stone-cum-mortar ramparts were erected in these eastern borderlands during the Ottonian period. The dendrochronological analysis of circular strongholds in the region of Magdeburg indicates that Ottonian fortifications erected against Slavic raids were earth-and-timber structures²³ similar to those built by the Slavs on the other side of the frontier. Ringforts in Slavic territory have been traditionally dated to a very early date, namely to the late sixth or early seventh century. Some archaeologists viewed such forts as the result of social and economic changes taking place in Slavic society, especially the rise of a class of noble landlords, of feudal-like structures not very different from that of the Merovingian West. Recent excavation of more than twenty-five ringforts in the Niederlausitz region with dates firmly established by means of dendrochronological analysis has shown this interpretation to be wrong.²⁴ No strongholds existed during the entire period between the assumed

²² Henning, ‘Der slawische Siedlungsraum’, pp. 134–35.

²³ Wolfgang Schwarz, ‘Burgwallgrabung in Osterburg, Ldkr. Stendal’, in *Archäologische Berichte Sachsen-Anhalt*, 1994 (Halle, 1996), pp. 163–72.

²⁴ For the first survey of results of dendrochronological analysis of Slavic, Tornow-type of fortifications in eastern Germany and Poland, see Joachim Henning, ‘Der Burg-Siedlungskomplex von Presenchen: Probleme und Perspektiven slawischer Archäologie im Braunkohlengebiet der Niederlausitz’, in *Archäologische Erkundung und Rettungsarbeit in Tagebaugebieten Mitteleuropas: Internationale Arbeitstagung Sallgast, Kr. Finsterwalde, 10.–14. April 1989*, ed. by Bernhard Gramsch and Günter Wetzel (Berlin, 1991), pp. 141–46; ‘Germanen, Slawen, Deutsche: Neue Untersuchungen zum frühgeschichtlichen Siedlungswesen östlich der Elbe’, *Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, 66 (1991), 119–33; Joachim Henning and Karl-Uwe Heußner, ‘Zur Burgengeschichte im 10. Jahrhundert: Neue archäologische und dendrochronologische Daten zu Anlagen vom Typ Tornow’, *Ausgrabungen und Funde*, 37 (1992), 314–24. For the results of the project since 1991, see Joachim Henning, ‘Archäologische Forschungen an Ringwällen in Niederungslage: Die Niederlausitz als Burgenlandschaft des östlichen Mitteleuropa im frühen Mittelalter’, in *Frühmittelalterlicher Burgenbau*, ed. by Henning and Ruttkay, pp. 8–21; ‘Neues zum Tornower Typ. Keramische Formen und Formenspektren des Frühmittelalters im Licht dendrochronologischer Daten zum westslawischen Siedlungsraum’, in *Kraje słowiańskie w wiekach średnich: Profanum i sacrum*, ed. by Władysław Łosiński and Hanna Kóčka-Krenz (Poznań, 1998), pp. 392–408; Joachim Henning and Thorsten Westphal, ‘Forschungen zur archäologischen Chronologie des Frühmittelalters und das dendrochronologische Labor an der Universität Frankfurt am Main’, in *Probleme der mitteleuropäischen Dendrochronologie*, ed. by Jitka Dvorska and Lumír Poláček (Brno, 1999), pp. 28–34; and ‘Der slawische Siedlungsraum’.

Slavic colonization of this area and the beginnings of the east Frankish and Ottonian encroachment in the late 800s. The plotting of the dendro-dates from Niederlausitz, combined with that of dendrochronological results of excavations in the region between the Elbe and the Oder/Neiße rivers, illustrates an increase in building activity, in sharp contrast to more peaceful periods, whatever interpretation we may choose for the lack of fortification building activities during such times (Fig. 3). Peaks of building activity can easily be associated with preparations before military campaigns launched against the Slavs by Saxon kings and emperors. For example, the building activity in the Niederlausitz region reached a peak in c. 919, the year in which Henry the Fowler was crowned King of East Francia. Henry had already made a name for himself during the expeditions he led into Slavic territory at the orders of his father, Otto, the Prince of Saxony.²⁵ The Slavic tribes on the river Elbe could not expect anything good from his coronation in Fritzlar. Indeed, in 928 at the head of a well-equipped army, Henry began a sustained and ultimately successful campaign against the Slavic centres in the regions of Brandenburg, Gana (near Meissen), and Prague.²⁶ There is no mention in literary sources of the conquest of small strongholds, of which there were hundreds in each of the three areas. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that they could not have escaped unscathed. The *Annals of Hildesheim* and the *Annals of Wissembourg* only mention that, in 932, Henry was in 'Lonsicin' (Lausitz),²⁷ perhaps an indication that the King was busy imposing the *pax Saxonica* on his Slavic neighbours. This may indeed be the reason for the sudden halt in building activities in Lausitz. The same is true about forts in the northern Slavic territories. A significant peak coincides here with the independence movement ending in 955, the year in which Otto I inflicted a crushing defeat on the Slavs at the Recknitz River. Moreover, building activities revealed by means of dendrochronology increased considerably by the time of the major Slavic revolt of 983.

The results of the joint studies of Slavic strongholds east of the river Vistula by a team from the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt and the Polish

²⁵ Widukind, *Rerum gestarum Saxonicarum*, I 17, ed. by Paul Hirsch and Hans-Eberhard Lohmann (Hannover, 1935), MGH SS rer. Germ. 60:27.

²⁶ Widukind, *Rerum gestarum Saxonicarum*, I 35, MGH SS rer. Germ. 60:50. For the archaeological evidence, see Karl-Uwe Heußner and Thorsten Westphal, 'Dendrochronologische Untersuchungen an Holzfunden aus frühmittelalterlichen Burgwällen zwischen Elbe und Oder', in *Frühmittelalterlicher Burgenbau*, ed. by Henning and Ruttkay, pp. 223–34 (Brandenburg); Tomasz Herbich, Roman Krivánek, Krzysztof Misiewicz, and Judith Oexle, 'Magnetic Surveys of the Site Burg Gana (Hof/Stauchitz) in Saxony', *Archaeologia Polona*, 41 (2003), 197–200 with figs 1–3 (Gana); Jitka Dvorská and Ivana Boháčová, 'Das historische Holz im Kontext der archäologischen Untersuchungen der Prager Burg', in *Probleme der mitteleuropäischen Dendrochronologie*, ed. by Dvorská and Polaček, pp. 55–67 (Prague).

²⁷ *Annals of Hildesheim* a. 932, ed. by Georg Heinrich Pertz (Hannover 1839; repr., 1987), MGH SS 3:54; *Annals of Wissemburg* a. 932, ed. by Georg Heinrich Pertz (Hannover 1839; repr., 1987), MGH SS 3:55.

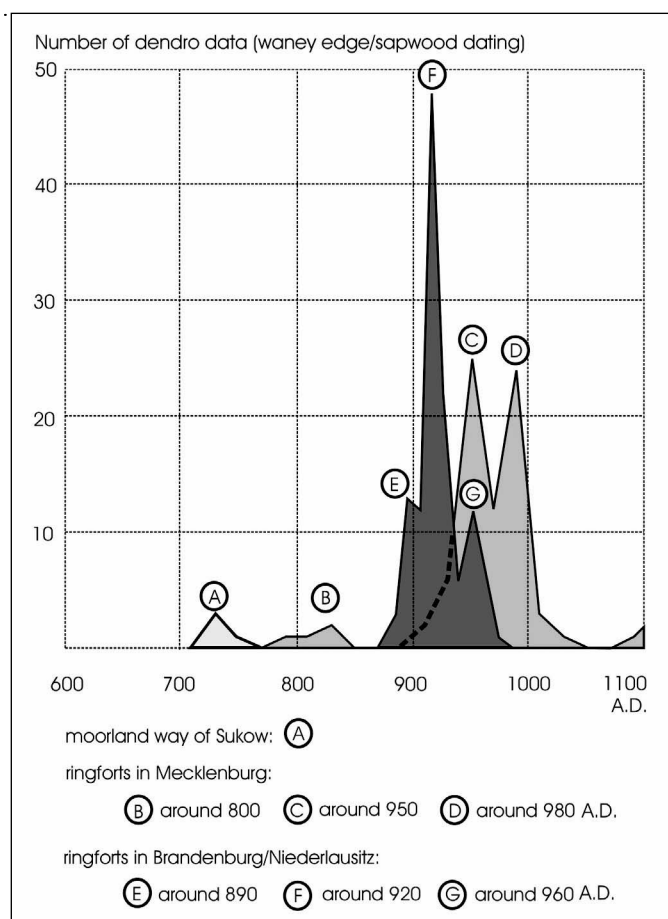


Figure 3. Construction activities in early medieval ringforts between the Elbe and the Oder/Neiße rivers: plotting of dendro-dates from Niederlausitz, Brandenburg, and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Academy of Sciences in Warsaw clearly confirm this emerging picture.²⁸ In Poland, strongholds of quasi-circular plan seem to have been built even later than those on the frontiers with the Frankish and Ottonian empires. In conclusion, the association between strongholds, on the one hand, and military or political activity, on the other, was much stronger than previously thought. By contrast, social and economic

²⁸ *Frühe Burgen in Masowien und die Entstehung des Piastenstaates: Archäologie und Dendrochronologie zur Geschichte Europas im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Marek Dulnicz and Joachim Henning (Bonn, 2006), in preparation.

developments, while of fundamental significance, do not seem to have had a direct influence on the decision-making process leading to the construction of strongholds.

The circular ringforts emerged as a Central European phenomenon of the early Middle Ages, first tested against Viking raids into coastal areas (Netherlands and Frisia),²⁹ then against Slavic and Magyar attacks across the Elbe. This type of stronghold was later adopted by Vikings (e.g. the so-called Trelleborg forts in Denmark³⁰) and Slavs. By the late 800s, the geographic distribution of circular strongholds had reached the river Oder. Shortly before or after 900, it crossed the Vistula.

From the point of view of fortification methods, the eastern frontiers first of the Carolingian and later of the Ottonian Empire were much more areas of cultural equalizing, compensation, and exchange than a shield of civilization against barbarians.³¹

²⁹ For the Netherlands, see R. Van Heeringen, P. A. Hendriks, and A. Mars, *Vroege-Middeleeuwse ringwalburgen in Zeeland* (Amersfoort, 1995). For Holstein, see Dirk Laggin, 'Die Stellerburg in Ditmarschen', *Hammaburg*, 9 (1989), 191–98. For Brittany, see Jean-Pierre Nicolardot, 'Éléments de datation du champ de Péran, Plédran (Côtes-du-Nord)', in *Bretagne, pays de Loire, Touraine, Poitou à l'époque mérovingienne: Actes de la 1^{re} Journée Nationale de l'Association Française d'Archéologie Mérovingienne, Rennes, Juin 1984* (Paris, 1988), pp. 73–77.

³⁰ Else Roesdahl, 'Dendrochronology and the Viking Studies in Denmark, with a Note on the Beginning of the Viking Age', in *Developments around the Baltic Sea in the Viking Age: The Twelfth Viking Congress*, ed. by Björn Ambrosiani and Helen Clarke (Stockholm, 1994), pp. 106–16.

³¹ I wish to express my gratitude to Angela Ehrlich (Frankfurt am Main) for the computer-graphics drawing of Figures 2 and 3.

The *Limes Saxoniae* as Part of the Eastern Borderlands of the Frankish and Ottonian-Salian Empire

MATTHIAS HARDT

Following the so-called Migration period and the first mention of the Slavs in East Central Europe, a new frontier region developed, which divided Europe into a Germanic and Romance West, on the one hand, and a Slavic and nomadic East, on the other. While in Antiquity the contrast had been between a civilized South on Mediterranean shores and a barbarian North beyond the rivers Rhine and Danube, the early medieval division of the European continent into a western Frankish-Saxon and an eastern Slavic area followed a line running from the Bay of Kiel in the North to the Bay of Trieste in the South. People speaking Germanic and Slavic languages intermingled in several settlement areas along this invisible line: between the Baltic Sea and the Elbe River (the focus of this essay); west of the Elbe in the regions of Lower Saxony and Sachsen-Anhalt known as the Hannoversches Wendland and the Altmark;¹ in the region to the south from Magdeburg; in Thuringia, west of the Saale River (Fig. 1); along the Upper Main River and west of the Regnitz River in Upper Franconia, as well as in the Böhmerwald, the mountain range separating Bavaria from Bohemia; in Upper and Lower Austria; in the Drava valley, as well as in the mountains of Austrian Carinthia and Slovenia.

The frontier emerged in several phases. Initially, there seems to have been large forested areas, swamps, and marshlands separating Saxons, Thuringians, Bavarians,

¹ Matthias Hardt, 'Das Hannoversche Wendland – eine Grenzregion im frühen und hohen Mittelalter', in *Beiträge zur Archäologie und Geschichte Nordostniedersachsens: Berndt Wachter zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. by Wolfgang Jürries (Lüchow, 1991), pp. 155–67; Matthias Hardt and Hans K. Schulze, 'Altmark und Wendland als deutsch-slawische Kontaktzone', in *Wendland und Altmark in historischer und sprachwissenschaftlicher Sicht*, ed. by Roderich Schmidt (Lüneburg, 1992), pp. 1–44.



Figure 1. Slavic peoples and marches between the Elbe, Saale, and Oder Rivers during the tenth century. Source: *Otto der Große, Magdeburg und Europa*, ed. by Matthias Puhle (Mainz, 2001), p. 66.

and Lombards from the Slavic groups to the east. Following the integration of the former into the Frankish kingdom, especially after the Saxon wars of 772–805² and Charlemagne's coronation as a Roman Emperor, a true frontier organization came into being in apparently close imitation of the Roman frontiers of Late Antiquity along the Rhine and the Danube.³ While the Diedenhofen capitulary of 805 mentions a few places in the eastern borderlands of Saxony, Thuringia, and Bavaria, which served for the control of trade, especially with weapons, with the neighbouring Slavs and Avars,⁴ in 806 Charlemagne for the first time ordered the building of forts on the banks of the rivers Elbe and Saale.⁵ For a short while during the early 800s, the Empire was thus protected on the eastern border by a series of forts built along the main rivers, with at least two bridgeheads at Magdeburg, on the Elbe, and at Halle, on the Saale River.⁶ The archaeological evidence suggests that the system remained in existence in the northern districts only during the life of Charlemagne and, possibly, the reign of his successor, Louis the Pious. By 850, for example, the Hühbeck fort in the Hannoversches Wendland, located across the Elbe from Lenzen, the tribal centre of the Slavic Linones, had been completely abandoned.⁷

The picture began to change shortly after Charlemagne's intervention in the region north of the Elbe River. First, the Emperor transferred in 804 the entire area between the Elbe and the Eider rivers to the Slavic tribe of the Obodrites, who had

² Lothar Dralle, 'Wilzen, Sachsen und Franken um das Jahr 800', in *Aspekte der Nationenbildung im Mittelalter*, ed. by Helmut Beumann and Werner Schröder (Sigmaringen, 1978), pp. 205–28.

³ Matthias Hardt, 'Hesse, Elbe, Saale and the Frontiers of the Carolingian Empire', in *The Transformation of Frontiers: From Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. by Walter Pohl, Ian Wood, and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden, 2001), pp. 224–32; and 'Prignitz und Hannoversches Wendland: Das Fürstentum der slawischen Linonen im frühen und hohen Mittelalter', in *Im Dienste der historischen Landeskunde: Beiträge zu Archäologie, Mittelalterforschung, Namenkunde und Museumsarbeit vornehmlich in Sachsen. Festgabe für Gerhard Billig zum 75. Geburtstag, dargebracht von Schülern und Kollegen*, ed. by Rainer Aurig, Reinhardt Butz, Ingolf Gräßler, and André Thieme (Beucha, 2002), pp. 96–98.

⁴ Capitulary of Diedenhofen, in *MGH Legum II, Capitularia regum Francorum I*, ed. by Alfred Boretius (Hannover, 1883), p. 123.

⁵ *Royal Frankish Annals*, ed. by Friedrich Kurze (Hannover, 1895; repr., 1950), MGH SS rer. Germ. 6:120.

⁶ *Chronicle of Moissac* a. 806, ed. Georg H. Pertz (Hannover, 1826), MGH SS 1:308. See also Matthias Hardt, 'Linien und Säume, Zonen und Räume and der Ostgrenze des Reiches im frühen und hohen Mittelalter', in *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Vienna, 2000), pp. 42–45.

⁷ The fort is mentioned for the last time in the *Royal Frankish Annals* a. 811, MGH SS rer. Germ. 6:134. For the archaeology of Hühbeck, see Berndt Wachter, 'Das Hühbeck-Kastell bei Vietze', in *Hannoversches Wendland*, ed. by Berndt Wachter (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 202–03. See also Hardt, 'Das Hannoversche Wendland', pp. 156–57.

been loyal allies of the Franks during the Saxon wars.⁸ He also moved Saxon inhabitants of that area into the heartland of his Empire.⁹ But these aggressive policies produced no long-term peace in the region. Five years later, the Emperor made the decision to build a fort at Esesfeld, in response to Danish raids from across the Elbe.¹⁰ In 810, he summoned the King of the Obodrites in Verden, on the Aller River, to discuss the terms of the old alliance.¹¹ It is possible that an important item of the agenda was the status of the frontier separating the Saxon from the Slavic lands.¹² If so, whatever agreement was eventually reached, it must have been short-lived. The frontier was under attack in 817, during the anti-Frankish rebellion of Sclaomir, 'king of the Obodrites', who allied himself with the sons of the Danish king Göttrik.¹³ Sclaomir was captured two years later by the 'prefects' of the *limes Saxonicus* and by the Emperor's *legati* who led a quick military intervention in the region north of the river Elbe. He was consequently brought to Aachen.¹⁴ Nothing else is known about either the 'prefects' or their place of residence, but a few years later the *Royal Frankish Annals* report the fortification of yet another site called Delbende.¹⁵ The exact location of that site in the region north of the Elbe River is still a

⁸ Raimund Ernst, *Die Nordwestslaven und das fränkische Reich* (Berlin, 1976), pp. 154–74.

⁹ *Royal Frankish Annals* a. 804, MGH SS rer. Germ. 6:118.

¹⁰ *Royal Frankish Annals* a. 809, MGH SS rer. Germ. 6:129. For the topography and the strategic location of Esesfeld, see Herbert Jankuhn, *Die Frühgeschichte: Vom Anfang der Völkerwanderungszeit bis zum Ende der Wikingerzeit* (Neumünster, 1957), pp. 73, 137, and 144. For Charlemagne's policies against the northern neighbours of the Empire, see Jankuhn, *Die Frühgeschichte*, pp. 141–42 and 145–46; and 'Karl der Große und der Norden', in *Karl der Große: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, vol. 1, ed. by Helmut Beumann (Düsseldorf, 1965), pp. 699–707.

¹¹ *Annals of St Amandus* a. 810, ed. by Georg H. Pertz (Hannover, 1826), MGH SS 1:14.

¹² For the negotiations in Verden, see Arno Jenkis, 'Die Eingliederung "Nordalbingiens" in das Frankenreich', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für schleswig-holsteinische Geschichte*, 79 (1955), 81–104; Wolfgang Prange, *Siedlungsgeschichte des Landes Lauenburg im Mittelalter* (Neumünster, 1960), p. 162; Jankuhn, *Die Frühgeschichte*, p. 141; Elisabeth Noll, 'Der Limes Saxoniae und seine Burgwallanlagen aus archäologischer Sicht', in *Krieg und Frieden im Herzogtum Lauenburg und in seinen Nachbarterritorien vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende des Kalten Krieges*, ed. by Eckardt Opitz (Bochum, 2000), p. 16. According to Karl Kersten, *Vorgeschichte des Kreises Herzogtum Lauenburg* (Neumünster, 1951), p. 117, the beginnings of the *limes Saxoniae* may be dated to the years between 815 and 817.

¹³ Bernhard Friedmann, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des abodritischen Fürstentums bis zum Ende des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1986), p. 65.

¹⁴ *Royal Frankish Annals* a. 819, MGH SS rer. Germ. 6:149, English translation by Bernhard Walter Scholz and Barbara Rogers (Ann Arbor, 1970), p. 105. See also Jankuhn, *Die Frühgeschichte*, pp. 137 and 141–42.

¹⁵ *Royal Frankish Annals* a. 822, MGH SS rer. Germ. 6:158. See Jankuhn, *Die Frühgeschichte*, p. 142.

matter of dispute,¹⁶ but it seems likely that the fort was built not far from the region in which the *limes Saxonicus* would reportedly emerge two hundred years later.

However, according to the eleventh-century chronicle of Adam of Bremen, the beginnings of the *limes Saxonicus* go back to the ninth-century construction of the fortified frontier along the Elbe and Saale rivers. Adam claims to have seen a charter of Charlemagne giving a description of the *limes*:

We have found a description of the Saxon frontier (*limes Saxonicus*) on the other side of the Elbe River, as designed by Charlemagne and other emperors. It ran as follows. From the eastern banks of the river it went to the little river called Mescenreiza by the Slavs. At its upper course, the *limes* turns away from that river and runs through the Delvenau forest to the Delvenau River. From there it proceeds to the Hornbek Mill River and to the springs of the Bille River. From there it goes on to the stone of Ludwine, to some marked birch trees and to the river Barnitz. From there it turns to the river Swamp- or Southern-Beste and reaches up to the Trave forest, then through that forest upward to the Blunkerbach lowlands. Then the *limes* proceeds to the woods at the fields' rim and then in direct way upward to the ford through the rivulet at the field rims. At that place Burwido has won a single combat against a Slavonic fighter who was then killed by him. There was a commemorative stone set in that place for the event. From that rivulet, the *limes* goes down to the Colse Lake, from there to the eastern Schwentinefeld and to the Schwentine River. Along that river the frontier goes on to the Scythian Gulf and into the Baltic Sea.¹⁷

¹⁶ Hermann Hofmeister, 'Limes Saxoniae', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für schleswig-holsteinische Geschichte*, 56 (1927), 126–28; Kersten, *Vorgeschichte*, pp. 117–19; Jankuhn, *Die Frühgeschichte*, pp. 143–44. See also Karl-Wilhelm Struve, 'Der Raum zwischen Elbe und Trave in slawischer Zeit', in *Kreis Herzogtum Lauenburg*, ed. by Fritz Rudolf Averdick, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1983), pp. 118–19; Torsten Kempke, 'Bemerkungen zur Delvenau-Stecknitz Route im frühen Mittelalter', in *Archäologischer Befund und historische Deutung: Festschrift für Wolfgang Hübener*, ed. by Hartwig Lüdtke (Neumünster, 1989), p. 183; Torsten Kempke, 'Archäologische Beiträge zur Grenze zwischen Sachsen und Slawen im 8. – 9. Jahrhundert', in *Studien zur Archäologie des Ostseeraumes: Von der Eisenzeit zum Mittelalter. Festschrift für Michael Müller-Wille*, ed. by Anke Wesse (Neumünster, 1998), p. 376; Noll, 'Der Limes Saxoniae', pp. 17–20 and 32; Arne Schmid-Hecklau, *Slawenzeitliche Funde im Kreis Herzogtum Lauenburg* (Neumünster, 2002), pp. 197–200.

¹⁷ Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* II 18, ed. by Bernhard Schmeidler (Hannover, 1917), pp. 73–74: 'Invenimus quoque limitem Saxoniae, quae trans Albiam est, prescriptum a Karolo et imperatoribus ceteris, ita se continentem, hoc est: Ab Albiae ripa orientali usque ad rivulum, quem Sclavi Mescenreiza vocant. A quo sursum limes currit per silvam Delvunder usque in fluvium Delvundam. Sicque pervenit in Horchembici et Bilenispring. Inde ad Liudwinestein et Wispircon et Birznig progreditur. Tunc in Horbistenon vadit usque in Travena silvam, sursumque per ipsam in Bulilunkin. Mox in Agrimeshou, et recto ad vadum, qui dicitur Agrimeswidil, ascendit. Ubi et Burwido fecit duellum contra campionem Sclavorum, interfecitque eum; et lapis in eodem loco positus est in memoriam. Ab eadem igitur aqua sursum procurrens terminus in stagnum Colse vadit, sicque ad orientalem

The description of the *limes* makes it clear that Adam must have taken it from some royal charter, possibly one accompanying a donation or the foundation of a bishopric.¹⁸ From the 1700s onward, Adam's description has been taken literally as the basis for the reconstruction of a fortified frontier north of the Elbe River. Apart from a few details, scholars have long agreed on the precise location of the place names mentioned in the text (Fig. 2).¹⁹ Today, it seems clear that the charter Adam saw contained a description of a border, with a number of names of rivers, woods, and landmarks. River names served to structure visually the landscape as a borderland. After the Elbe,²⁰ the most important river mentioned in the charter is Mescenreiza, whose Slavic name may be translated as the 'land between two rivers'.²¹ That land must have been next to the mouth of another river flowing into the Elbe that is mentioned in the charter, the Delvenau.²² 'Horchenic' may be translated as the

campum venit Zuentifeld, usque in ipsum flumen Zuentinam. Per quem limes Saxoniae usque in pelagus Scythicum et mare, quod vocant orientale, delabitur.' My English translation of the text follows closely the German translation by Werner Trillmich, *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der Hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches* (Darmstadt, 1961), pp. 247 and 249.

¹⁸ Hofmeister, 'Limes Saxoniae', p. 96.

¹⁹ For the reconstruction of the *limes Saxoniae*, see Walter Lammers, 'Germanen und Slawen in Nordalbingen', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für schleswig-holsteinische Geschichte*, 79 (1955), 17–80 with map A; Franz Engel, 'Die mittelalterlichen "Mannhagen" und das Problem des Limes Saxoniae', *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte*, 88 (1951), reprint in his *Beiträge zur Siedlungsgeschichte und historischen Landeskunde: Mecklenburg-Pommern-Niedersachsen*, ed. by Roderich Schmidt (Cologne, 1970), p. 263 pl. 84. See also Hofmeister, 'Limes Saxoniae', pp. 96–115 and 137–50; Carl Matthiessen, 'Der Limes Saxoniae', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für schleswig-holsteinische Geschichte*, 68 (1940), 43–57; Kersten, *Vorgeschichte*, pp. 115–16; Engel, 'Die mittelalterlichen "Mannhagen"', pp. 257–69; Jan-kuhn, *Die Frühgeschichte*, pp. 137–40; Prange, *Siedlungsgeschichte*, pp. 156–61; Helmrich Ostertun, 'Der Limes Saxoniae zwischen Trave und Schwentine', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für schleswig-holsteinische Geschichte*, 92 (1967), 9–37; Struve, 'Der Raum zwischen Elbe und Trave', pp. 116–17; Werner Budesheim, 'Der "limes Saxoniae" nach der Quelle Adams von Bremen, insbesondere in seinem südlichen Abschnitt', in *Zur slawischen Besiedlung zwischen Elbe und Oder*, ed. by Werner Budesheim (Neumünster, 1994), pp. 28–43; Ulrich March, 'Die Wehrverfassung der Grafschaft Holstein', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für schleswig-holsteinische Geschichte*, 96 (1971), 15–18; Schmid-Hecklau, *Slawenzeitliche Funde*, pp. 115, 117–20, 169–74 with map 19, 370 with map 24, and 375; Hardt, 'Linien und Säume', pp. 46–51; Michael Schmauder, 'Überlegungen zur östlichen Grenze des karolingischen Reiches', in *Grenze und Differenz*, ed. by Pohl and Reimitz, pp. 58–62.

²⁰ Antje Schmitz, *Die Ortsnamen des Kreises Herzogtum Lauenburg und der Stadt Lübeck* (Neumünster, 1990), pp. 387–89.

²¹ Hofmeister, 'Limes Saxoniae', pp. 97–98; Schmitz, *Die Ortsnamen*, p. 407.

²² Hofmeister, 'Limes Saxoniae', pp. 98–99; Schmitz, *Die Ortsnamen*, pp. 384–85.

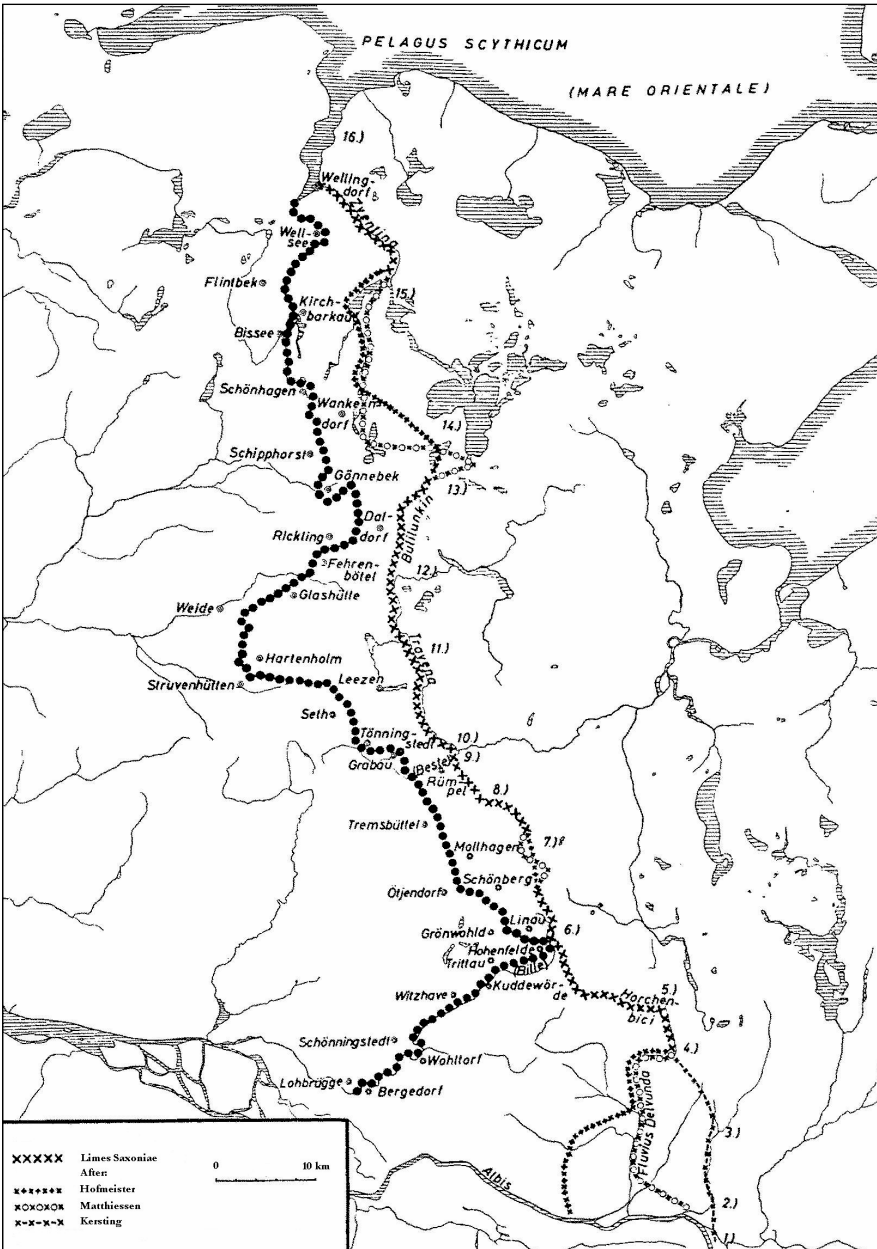


Figure 2. The *limes Saxoniae*.
After Lammers, 'Germanen in Nordalbingen', map A.

Hornbek Mill River, which is a tributary of the Stecknitz River.²³ The ‘Bilenispring’ is obviously the source of the River Bille.²⁴ ‘Liudwinstein’ and ‘Wispircon’ may be interpreted as landmarks. The former was a stone set by or called after a person named Liudwin,²⁵ while ‘Wispircon’²⁶ refers to a group of birch trees marked by special signs, perhaps crosses, in order to mark a border. Birznig is most likely the Barnitz River,²⁷ a tributary of the Beste, mentioned as ‘Horbistenon’ in the charter.²⁸ The Trave forest took its name from the river Trave,²⁹ which flows by Lübeck. ‘Bulilunkin’ may refer to the lowlands of the Blunkerbach near Blunk,³⁰ north of what later became the city of Bad Segeberg. According to Werner Trillmich, ‘Agrimeshou’ and ‘Agrimeswidil’ were the Old Saxon names³¹ of an area along a little river now called Tensfelder Au.³² More interesting is Adam’s mention of a certain Burwido and of the duel which he had won against a Slavic warrior, perhaps over a border dispute. The stone commemorating that victory was certainly set to mark a frontier. Nothing else is known about this case and its participants, but it is not unlikely that the stone had an inscription, perhaps in runes, that mentioned the name Burwido. Lake Colse has a Slavic name, whose meaning suggests that it should be identified with the Stocksee³³ south of Lake Plön, near the modern city of Plön. The Zuentifeld is evidently named after the river Zuentina (Schwentine),³⁴ which flows into the Baltic Sea. Adam’s rendition of Charlemagne’s charter is thus a detailed description of the frontier between Saxons and Obodrites from the Elbe near Lauenburg to the Baltic Sea at the Bay of Kiel.

However, merely identifying the sites that Adam learned about from the Carolingian charter does not take into consideration the nature of the frontier region separating Slavs from Saxons during the early Middle Ages. Rivulets, lakes, stones,

²³ Hofmeister, ‘Limes Saxoniae’, p. 99; Schmitz, *Die Ortsnamen*, pp. 151–52 and 398.

²⁴ Hofmeister, ‘Limes Saxoniae’, p. 99; Schmitz, *Die Ortsnamen*, pp. 381–82.

²⁵ Hofmeister, ‘Limes Saxoniae’, p. 99.

²⁶ Herrmann Hofmeister ‘Wispircon im Limes Saxoniae (Sachsengrenze)’, *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für schleswig-holsteinische Geschichte*, 62 (1934), 311–19.

²⁷ Hofmeister, ‘Limes Saxoniae’, p. 100; Schmitz, *Die Ortsnamen*, pp. 378–79.

²⁸ Hofmeister, ‘Limes Saxoniae’, pp. 100–01; Schmitz, *Die Ortsnamen*, pp. 380–81.

²⁹ Schmitz, *Die Ortsnamen*, pp. 427–29.

³⁰ Hofmeister, ‘Limes Saxoniae’, pp. 101–02 and 113.

³¹ Trillmich, *Quellen*, p. 249.

³² Hofmeister, ‘Limes Saxoniae’, pp. 102 and 113–14.

³³ Hofmeister, ‘Limes Saxoniae’, p. 103; Antje Schmitz, *Die Orts- und Gewässernamen des Kreises Plön* (Neumünster, 1986), p. 217.

³⁴ Hofmeister, ‘Limes Saxoniae’, pp. 103–05; H. E. Hoff, ‘Das Sventinefeld und der Limes Saxoniae’, *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für schleswig-holsteinische Geschichte*, 63 (1935), 357–68; Schmitz, *Die Orts- und Gewässernamen*, pp. 242–44.

or specially marked trees were important for the description of settlement and property borders, and there is plenty of evidence for concerns with such landmarks in Carolingian and Ottonian charters.³⁵ Carolingian land surveying was in many ways a continuation of late antique agrimensural practices, but such practices had little, if any, application in the borderlands north of the Elbe River. The *limes Saxoniae* is mentioned as late as 1062 in a charter drawn for the Saxon duke Ordulf (Otto) to whom Emperor Henry IV planned to give the Ratzeburg castle. In the charter, Henry refers to the *limes* as distinct from his donation: ‘castellum Razesburg [. . .] in proprium dedimus atque tradidimus salvo per omnia et intacto Saxonie limite’.³⁶ The wording of this document makes it clear that the *limes* was not a borderline as reconstructed with minute detail on the basis of Adam of Bremen’s description. Moreover, that it was to be distinguished clearly from Henry’s concession of the Ratzeburg castle suggests that the *limes Saxoniae* was not a line, but an area, namely a frontier district on which the Emperor intended to maintain his direct control and authority, regardless of who owned in fact the castle.

Fortifications on the *limes Saxoniae* have long been the object of archaeological research.³⁷ Such forts as Nütschauer Schanze on the Trave River or Sirksfelder Wallberg have been commonly viewed in relation to the frontier, the latter even as a Slavic stronghold designed to secure the Obodritic borderlands.³⁸ But as is often the

³⁵ Reinhard Bauer, ‘Frühmittelalterliche Grenzbeschreibungen als Quelle für die Namenforschung’, in *Frühmittelalterliche Grenzbeschreibung und Namenforschung*, ed. by Friedhelm Debus (Heidelberg, 1992), pp. 35–60. See also Engel, ‘Die mittelalterlichen “Mannhagen”’, pp. 260–62; Matthiessen, ‘Der Limes Saxoniae’, pp. 41–42; Karl Rübel, *Die Franken, ihr Eroberungs- und Siedlungssystem im deutschen Volkslande* (Bielefeld, 1904), pp. 102–04.

³⁶ *Die Urkunden Heinrichs IV., 1056–1076*, ed. by Dietrich von Gladiss (Hannover, 1941), no. 87, also published with German translation in Karl Jordan, ‘Ratzeburg im politischen Kräftespiel in Nordelbingen’, in *Ratzeburg – 900 Jahre, 1062–1962*, ed. by Kurt Langenheime and Wilhelm Prillwitz (Ratzeburg, 1962), pp. 34–35. See Erwin Aßmann, ‘Salvo Saxoniae limite: Ein Beitrag zum Problem des Limes Saxoniae’, *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für schleswig-holsteinische Geschichte*, 77 (1953), 195–99; Engel, ‘Die mittelalterlichen “Mannhagen”’, pp. 270–71; Jordan, ‘Ratzeburg im politischen Kräftespiel’, pp. 25–28.

³⁷ Carl Schuchhardt, ‘Ausgrabungen am Limes Saxoniae’, *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Lübeckische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 15 (1913), 1–26; Hofmeister, ‘Limes Saxoniae’, pp. 115–37; Kersten, *Vorgeschichte*, pp. 117–22; Jankuhn, *Die Frühgeschichte*, pp. 140 and 142–44; Prange, *Siedlungsgeschichte*, p. 163; Ostertun, ‘Der Limes Saxoniae’, pp. 31–33; Karl-Wilhelm Struve, ‘Archäologische Ergebnisse zur Frage der Burgenorganisation bei den Sachsen und Slawen in Holstein’, *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte*, 106 (1970), 48; Schmauder, ‘Überlegungen zur östlichen Grenze’, pp. 60–61; Noll, ‘Der Limes Saxoniae’, pp. 25–34; Schmid-Hecklau, *Slawenzeitliche Funde*, pp. 21–26, 30–31, 117–20, 158, and 172–73.

³⁸ Hofmeister, ‘Limes Saxoniae’, pp. 122–23 and 127; Kersten, *Vorgeschichte*, pp. 112–14, 117, and 121; Jankuhn, *Die Frühgeschichte*, pp. 142–44; and ‘Die Nütschauer Schanze’, *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für schleswig-holsteinische Geschichte*, 79 (1955), 257–66; Walter

case in the contact regions between Germanic and Slavic populations, there is very little information about power or administrative structures that can be gleaned from the analysis of archaeological material, especially pottery.³⁹ It remains unclear who exactly had control over these forts at any given time. The Slavic settlement area extended over the *limes* along the Delvenau River, up to the Bille River,⁴⁰ but it is not known whether that expansion pre- or post-dates the first description of the *limes Saxoniae*. The ninth- to twelfth-century history of the settlement pattern in the region between the Elbe River and the Baltic Sea is one of continuous change,⁴¹ and it is not altogether impossible that the border stones mentioned by Adam of Bremen had been erected in commemoration of violent conflicts between Saxons and Slavs.⁴²

A number of place names in the region described by Adam allow a somewhat more detailed insight into the nature of the *limes Saxoniae*. Franz Engel has already pointed to the significance of the Mannhagen place names to be found not only north of the Elbe River, but all over north-eastern Germany, especially in Mecklenburg and Pomerania (Fig. 3).⁴³ According to Engel, the limits of the Slavic settlement-areas were protected by man-made barriers planted in neighbouring woods. At a height of about 2 m from the ground, all trees were cut off and tree-tops turned into hedges and palisades that, added to already existing thorny bushes, made the area impenetrable. Passage through the barrier was permitted only at specific points.⁴⁴ Such barriers are referred to in medieval sources as *indagines*,⁴⁵ and a variety of place names of Slavic origin seem to support Engel's interpretation. Indeed, such

Lammers, *Das Hochmittelalter bis zur Schlacht von Bornhöved* (Neumünster, 1981), p. 145; Noll, 'Der Limes Saxoniae', p. 32; Schmid-Hecklau, *Slawenzeitliche Funde*, p. 118.

³⁹ Noll, 'Der Limes Saxoniae', pp. 20–25 and 28.

⁴⁰ Schmid-Hecklau, *Slawenzeitliche Funde*, pp. 119 and 167.

⁴¹ Lammers, *Das Hochmittelalter*, pp. 144–50; Prange, *Siedlungsgeschichte*, pp. 162–63 and 348–49; Jordan, 'Ratzeburg im politischen Kräftespiel', pp. 27–28.

⁴² Erich Hoffmann, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der Obodriten zur Zeit der Nakoniden', in *Zwischen Christianisierung und Europäisierung: Beiträge zur Geschichte Osteuropas in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit. Festschrift für Peter Nitsche zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. by Eckhard Hübner, Ekkehard Klug, and Jan Kusber (Stuttgart, 1998), pp. 22–25.

⁴³ Engel, 'Die mittelalterlichen "Mannhagen"', and 'Mannhagen als Landesgrenzen im nordostdeutschen Kolonisationsgebiet', *Baltische Studien*, 44 (1957), 27–48.

⁴⁴ Engel, 'Die mittelalterlichen "Mannhagen"', pp. 250–53; and 'Grenzwälder und slawische Burgwardbezirke in Nordmecklenburg: Über die Methoden ihrer Rekonstruktion', in *Siedlung und Verfassung der Slawen zwischen Elbe, Saale und Oder*, ed. by Herbert Ludat (Gießen, 1960), pp. 125–40. See also Matthias Hardt, 'Ödland und Ödmark', in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. by Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, and Heiko Steuer, vol. XXI (Berlin, 2002), p. 582. For the distribution of forested lands in the region of the *limes Saxoniae*, see Prange, *Siedlungsgeschichte*, pp. 348–49; Schmid-Hecklau, *Slawenzeitliche Funde*, pp. 126–29, 147–49, 151–53, and 158.

⁴⁵ Engel, 'Die mittelalterlichen "Mannhagen"', pp. 242–43.

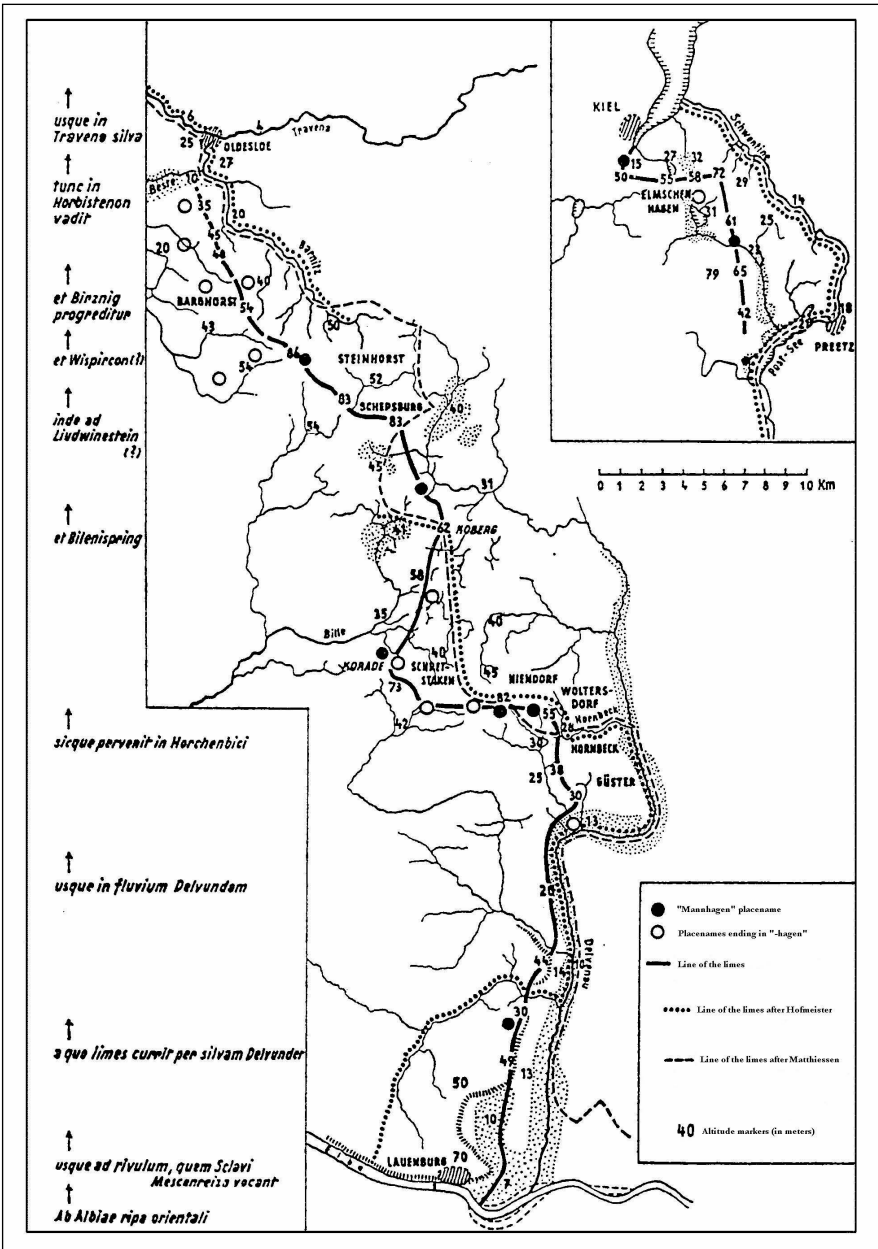


Figure 3. *Limes Saxoniae* according to Adam of Bremen's description.
After Engel, 'Die mittelalterlichen "Mannhagen"', p. 263, fig. 84.

toponyms as Ossek, Presieka, or Zasek may refer to clearings of the particular kind described above. Given their distribution within the network of roads and passageways in the region, it seems probable that such place names indicate the checkpoints where traffic and trade were monitored and regulated.⁴⁶ One Mannhagen place name⁴⁷ is located west of the Slavic stronghold at Hammerburg⁴⁸ that controlled traffic on the early medieval road linking Hamburg — the successor of the Esesfeld fort⁴⁹ — to Ratzeburg, the major centre of the Polabian Slavs.⁵⁰ The same road⁵¹ running across the western region of the *limes* could have been controlled from the Sirksfelder Wallberg stronghold.⁵² The place name ‘Witzeeze’ north of modern Lauenburg may also be interpreted as an indication of an earlier element of the *limes Saxoniae*.⁵³

Elsewhere in East Central Europe, but especially in Bohemia and Silesia,⁵⁴ barriers were in existence in places still called Presieka. More than written sources, interdisciplinary historical and onomastic research has greatly contributed to the understanding of the Saxon-Slavic relations in other regions than that north of the Elbe River. Jan Lesny demonstrated that a borderland of a similar nature existed in the

⁴⁶ Engel, ‘Die mittelalterlichen “Mannhagen”’, p. 249; Aurelia Dickers and Matthias Hardt, ‘Deutsch-Ossig im Tal der Lausitzer Neiße: Bemerkungen zu den Ausgrabungen in einer Dorfkirche südlich von Görlitz’, *Arbeits- und Forschungsberichte zur sächsischen Bodendenkmalpflege*, 40 (1998), 191 and 197.

⁴⁷ Engel, ‘Die mittelalterlichen “Mannhagen”’, p. 257; Schmitz, *Die Ortsnamen*, p. 223.

⁴⁸ Hammerburg is on the Stecknitz River and may have been easily accessed by boat. The site has been dated to the early ninth century by means of a cross-shaped belt mount of the Blatnica type. It is therefore possible that Hammerburg served as a port of trade in the immediate vicinity of the *limes Saxoniae*. See Kersten, *Vorgeschichte*, pp. 122–23, 127, 129–30, and 248; Kempke, ‘Bemerkungen zur Delvenau-Stecknitz Route’, pp. 178–82; Noll, ‘Der Limes Saxoniae’, pp. 30–31; Schmid-Hecklau, *Slawenzeitliche Funde*, pp. 118, 139, 145, 173, 229–38 with map 28, 379 with map 34, and 385.

⁴⁹ Jankuhn, *Die Frühgeschichte*, p. 144–46.

⁵⁰ Jordan, ‘Ratzeburg im politischen Kräftespiel’, pp. 144–46.

⁵¹ Prange, *Siedlungsgeschichte*, pp. 51–52, expressed doubts as to the medieval age of the road.

⁵² See note 38 above. Prange, *Siedlungsgeschichte*, pp. 52 and 163, was unsure about the association between the Sirksfelder Wallberg stronghold and the road between Hamburg and Ratzeburg.

⁵³ Schmitz, *Die Ortsnamen*, p. 319.

⁵⁴ Winfried Schich, ‘Die “Grenze” im östlichen Mitteleuropa im hohen Mittelalter’, *Siedlungsforschung: Archäologie-Geschichte-Geographie*, 9 (1991), 135–46; Walter Kuhn, ‘Der Löwenberger Hag und die Besiedlung der schlesischen Grenzwälder’, *Schlesien*, 8 (1963), 5–20; Hans-Joachim Karp, *Grenzen in Ostmitteleuropa während des Mittelalters: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Grenzlinie aus dem Grenzsaum* (Cologne, 1972), pp. 72–81; Hardt, ‘Linien und Säume’, p. 53.

Drawehn Hills (Fig. 4),⁵⁵ the west of a Polabian Slavic region — later to be known as the Hannoversches Wendland — adjacent to the Saxon lands around Lüneburg, the headquarters of Herrman Billung, the powerful Ottonian margrave in charge of the north-eastern borderlands. Just south of the point where Adam of Bremen places the southern end of the *limes Saxoniae*, Lesny's study revealed the existence of a string of place names of Slavic origin pointing to the existence of a forest barrier.

Similar conclusions could be drawn on the basis of the archaeological evidence from the Machnower Krummes Fenn settlement excavated in the 1970s by Adriaan von Müller. The dendrochronological analysis of wooden remains in the central Brandenburg region of Teltow (to the south-west from Berlin) showed a fortification date of c. 1200 (Fig. 5). At that time, the place was a checkpoint of a passageway through a densely forested area separating the Ascanian margraves of Brandenburg from the Wettinian duchy of Meißen, both engaged in aggressive territorial expansion. When the Wettinians were eventually expelled, the region was subject to a process of *melioratio terrae*, one result of which was the transformation of the old checkpoint into a small village. The village was abandoned some decades later, and its inhabitants seem to have moved a few kilometres away, to Zehlendorf, at the invitation of the Cistercian monks of Lehnin. The name of the village founded on the checkpoint site is unknown, but it is quite possible that its name was Mannhagen, Ossek, Zasek, or the like. As elsewhere, the collective memory could have preserved the original function of the checkpoint on the passageway through the woods.⁵⁶ This was certainly the case of many villages that appeared in the *limes* area and in the Drawehn Hills south of the river Elbe. Following the implementation in the second half of the twelfth century of territorial power on both sides of the former frontier, the vast forested lands considerably shrank due to systematic clearing efforts, as local Saxons and Slavs, together with incoming Western immigrants, began turning the *limes Saxoniae* borderlands into a predominantly agrarian landscape.⁵⁷ By the late 1200s, following the integration into the Empire of the Slavic principalities in Eastern and Central Germany, the lands on the eastern frontier of the Ottonian and Salian Empire had totally lost their function of frontier regions.⁵⁸ They were replaced

⁵⁵ Jan Lesny, 'Domniemane przedłużenie limesu saskiego w zachodnim Wendlandzie', in *Słowiańszczyzna polabska między Niemcami a polską*, ed. by Jerzy Strzelczyk (Poznań, 1981), pp. 245–54; Engel, 'Die mittelalterlichen "Mannhagen"', pp. 274–78.

⁵⁶ Willy Bastian, 'Neue Forschungen zur slawischen Befestigung', in *Probleme des frühen Mittelalters in archäologischer und historischer Sicht*, ed. by H. A. Knorr (Berlin, 1966), pp. 141–54.

⁵⁷ Engel, 'Die mittelalterlichen "Mannhagen"', p. 271; Prange, *Siedlungsgeschichte*, pp. 353–54; Schmid-Hecklau, *Slawenzeitliche Funde*, p. 134.

⁵⁸ Hardt, 'Linien und Säume', pp. 54–56; Engel, 'Grenzwälder und slawische Burgward-bezirke'.

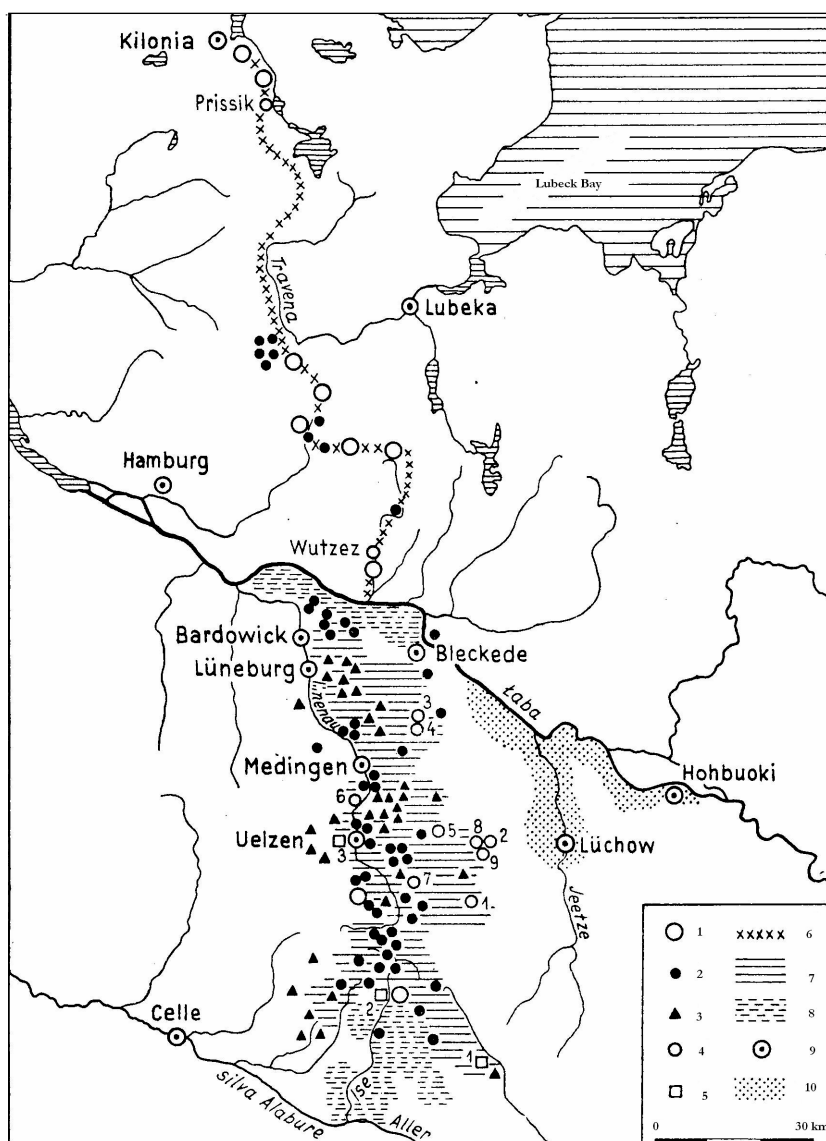


Figure 4. Place names and frontier north and south of the Elbe River: 1. 'Mannhagen' place names; 2. place names in '-hagen'; 3. place names in '-hege' (after Franz Engel, with additions); 4. 'Presieka' place names; 5. 'Brona' place names; 6. the line of the *limes Saxoniae* after Engel; 7. the region of the *limes* in the Wendish lands; 8. swamps (as in existence in the late 1800s); 9. important centres; 10. the Slavic settlement area in the Wendish lands. After Lesny, 'Domniemane przedłużenie', p. 246, fig. 1.

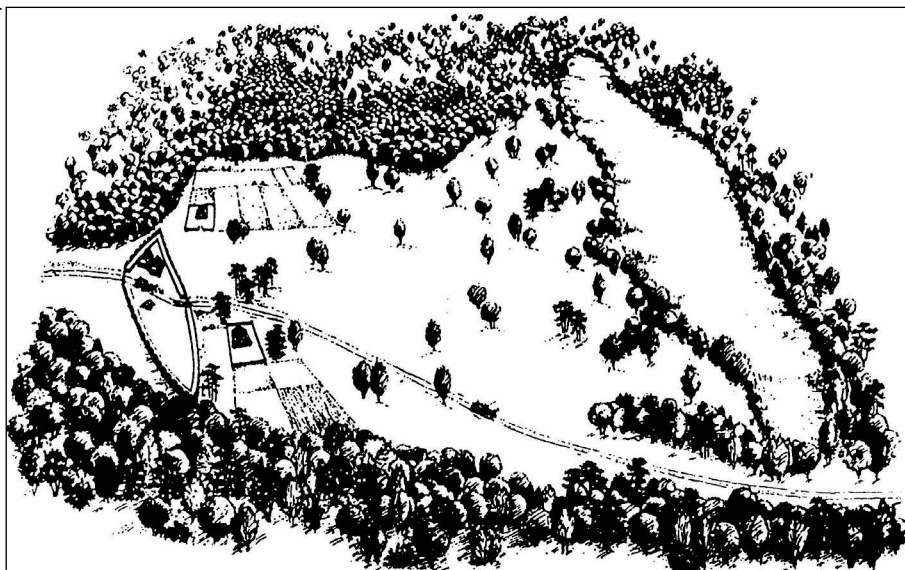


Figure 5. The Machnower Krummes Fenn stronghold. Source: A. von Müller, *Museumsdorf Düppel*, 5th edn (Berlin, 1991), p. 21.

by a new concept of frontier emerging in the Prussian lands beyond the Vistula River that came under the control of the Teutonic Knights.⁵⁹ The history of the *limes Saxoniae* is thus part of the long-term change of borderlands into frontiers⁶⁰ and of the process of *aedificatio terrae* in East Central Europe.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Karp, *Grenzen*.

⁶⁰ Hans F. Helmolt, 'Die Entwicklung der Grenzlinie aus dem Grenzsaume im alten Deutschland', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 17 (1896), 235–64.

⁶¹ Charles Higounet, *Die deutsche Ostsiedlung im Mittelalter* (Munich, 1990); Christian Lübke, *Das östliche Europa* (Munich, 2004), pp. 276–89 and 354–64.

Remarks on the Archaeological Evidence of Forts and Fortified Settlements in Tenth-Century Bulgaria

RASHO RASHEV

It is generally accepted that medieval fortifications are a reflection of the essential features of the military and civilian organization of society. The development of defences is indicative not only of the evolution of warfare but also of political and economic changes.¹ Their study is of particular importance in cases where only insufficient written evidence is available for comparison. Such is the case of early medieval Bulgaria.² In the development of its fortifications two stages can be identified, which may reflect two different forms of social organization.

¹ The literature on this subject is enormous. The reader may find arguments similar to those developed in this essay in several collections of studies, such as *Siedlung, Burg und Stadt: Studien zu ihren Anfängen*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Otto and Joachim Herrmann (Berlin, 1969); *Drevniaia Rus': Gorod, zamok, selo*, ed. by B. A. Kolchin (Moscow, 1985); *Burg, Burgstadt, Stadt: Zur Genese mittelalterlicher nichtagrarischer Zentren in Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. by Hansjürgen Brachmann (Berlin, 1995); *Frühmittelalterliche Machtzentren in Mitteleuropa: Mehrjährige Grabungen und ihre Auswertung: Symposium Mikulčice, 5.–9. September 1994*, ed. by Čenek Stana and Lumír Poláček (Brno, 1996); *Frühmittelalterlicher Burgenbau in Mittel- und Osteuropa: Tagung, Nitra vom 7. bis 10. Oktober 1996*, ed. by J. Henning and A. Ruttkey (Bonn, 1998); *Burgen in Mitteleuropa: Ein Handbuch. I. Bauformen und Entwicklung*, ed. by Horst Wolfgang Böhme (Stuttgart, 1999). For theoretical problems, see also *Problemy izucheniiia drevnikh poselenii v arkheologii: Sociologicheskii aspekt*, ed. by V. I. Guliaev and G. E. Afanas'ev (Moscow, 1990).

² For quick reference on early medieval Bulgaria, see now Jonathan Shepard, 'Bulgaria: The Other Balkan "Empire"', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. by Timothy Reuter, vol. III (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 567–85. See also Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova and Georgi Bakalov, 'La modèle politique de la Bulgarie médiévale', *Vizantiiskii Vremennik*, 55 (1998), 119–25.

Established in 681, Bulgaria conquered much of the north-eastern Balkans under Byzantine control. This conquest would be of utmost importance for the relations of the new state with the Empire throughout the Middle Ages.³ It determined the general line of these relations. Bulgaria aimed at retaining the original territory and, under favourable circumstances, at its extension to the south through the conquest of more Byzantine territory. Conversely, Byzantium used every opportunity to recuperate what had been lost. These two confronting policies found practical realization in a series of military conflicts, separated by short intervals of peace.

During the first century of its existence, Bulgaria could barely rival its neighbour in military strength.⁴ As a result, steps were taken towards fortifying the vulnerable segments of the southern frontier and building a system of fortifications in the interior. Without exception, these are earth and timber fortifications.⁵ They were built within the central region of early medieval Bulgaria. By that time, the frontier was probably along the Stara Planina range, which is easiest to cross through its eastern range. It was there that earthworks were erected to command the low passes across the mountains. In the early 800s, Bulgarian khans conquered parts of Thrace. Along the line of the new frontier, a 75-mile (120-km) long dike was erected, which is known by its modern Turkish name Erkessia. The dike blocked access from the Maritsa River valley to the Black Sea coast. Another line of similar installations was built along the coast itself.⁶ During this period, Byzantium's naval power had no rival. In order to prevent surprise landings and quick infiltration of the Bulgarian territory, small dikes blocked all low beaches. For the same reason, one dike and several fortifications were built along the right bank of the Danube during the decades before the Bulgarian occupation of the left bank. The narrowest land strip

³ See D. Angelov, 'Das byzantinische Reich und der mittelalterliche bulgarische Staat', *Byzantiaka*, 10 (1990), 11–22; Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova, 'Iuzhnye slaviane, protobolgary i Vizantiia: Problemy gosudarstvennogo i etnicheskogo razvitiia Bolgarii v VII–IX vv.', in *Rannefeodal'nye gosudarstva i narodnosti: iuzhnye i zapadnye slaviane VI–XII vv.*, ed. by G. G. Litavrin (Moscow, 1991), pp. 37–51; G. G. Litavrin, *Vizantiia, Bolgariia, Drevniaia Rus' (IX–nachalo XII v.)* (St Petersburg, 2000). See also Nikolai Russev, 'Bălgari, vizantiici i rusi po dolnoto techenie na Dunav prez 968–971 g. (Aspekti na kulturnoto vzaimodeistvie)', in *Bălgarite v Severnoto Prichernomorie: Izsledvaniia i materialy*, ed. by Petăr Todorov, vol. v (Veliko Tărnovo, 1996), pp. 175–87.

⁴ For a survey of eighth-century Bulgaria, see Borislav Primov, 'Bulgaria in the Eighth Century: A General Outline', *Byzantinobulgarica*, 5 (1978), 7–40. See also Genoveva Cankova-Petkova, 'Bulgarians and Byzantium during the First Decades after the Foundation of the Bulgarian State', *Byzantinoslavica*, 24 (1963), 41–53.

⁵ Rasho Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukreplenii na Dolniia Dunav (VII–XI v.)* (Varna, 1982), pp. 32–125.

⁶ See Rasho Rashev, 'Părvoto bălgarsko carstvo i moreto', in *Srednovekovna Bălgariia i Chernomorieto (sbornik dokladi ot nauchnata konferenciia): Varna – 1980*, ed. by Aleksandăr Kuzev (Varna, 1982), pp. 47–56.

between the Danube and the Black Sea was also blocked by means of the so-called Great Earthen Dike.⁷ This may well have been an inner fortification line, since the actual frontier was most likely farther to the north. Finally, a three-dike line was also built along the western frontier.

Within the frontier delineated by such means there were other fortifications, defended by ramparts and ditches. These were situated in a line along the main road running through the central area, from Silistra on the Danube to the capital at Pliska and the passes across the Stara Planina. After crossing the mountains, the road ran directly to the Erkessia Dike. These fortifications occupied the lowlands and, in most cases, were of regular, rectangular form. Only a few of them produced evidence of habitations dated from the eighth to the middle of the ninth century. They may have served as camps manned by military garrisons, which left no distinct traces of habitation. No open settlements were found in the hinterland.

As a whole this early fortification system shows a clear concern with defending the frontiers and controlling the main north-south road. It is therefore likely that all this was the result of an extraordinary mobilization of labour and materials at the order of the khan. In any case, the system was centred upon the capital at Pliska. With its 5681 acres (2300 ha) of fortified area, Pliska is the largest fortification of Bulgaria.⁸ From a technical point of view, the earthworks and forts, being quite

⁷ Carl Schuchhardt, 'Die sogenannten Trajanswälle in der Dobrudscha', *Abhandlungen der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, 12 (1918), 5–66; Aurelian Petre, 'Date noi în legatură cu valorile antice de apărare din Dobrogea', *Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice*, 42 (1973), 27–31; Petre Diaconu, 'Date noi privind "Valul mare de pământ" din Dobrogea', *Peuce*, 4 (1973–75), 199–209; A. Panaitescu, 'Contribuții la cunoașterea valului mare de pământ din Dobrogea', *Pontica*, 11 (1978), 241–45; Rasho Rashev, 'Văloвете в Dobrudzha (към въпроса за хронологията и предназначението им)', *Arkheologiya*, 21 (1979), 11–20; Gheorghe Papuc, 'Despre valorile dobrogene', *Pontica*, 25 (1992), 323–29; Ioana Bogdan-Cătăniciu, 'I valli di Traiano nella Dobrugia: Considerazioni sulle fotografie aeree', in *Omaggio a Dinu Adameșteanu*, ed. by Marius Porumb (Cluj-Napoca, 1996), pp. 201–26.

⁸ Joachim Henning, 'Pliska – monumentales Zeugnis vom Beginn der Geschichte des bulgarischen Staates', *Das Altertum*, 26 (1980), 18–26; Rasho Rashev, 'Pliska – the First Capital of Bulgaria', in *Ancient Bulgaria: Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Ancient History and Archaeology of Bulgaria, University of Nottingham, 1981*, ed. by A. G. Poulter (Nottingham, 1983), pp. 255–67; Rasho Rashev and Ianko Dimitrov, *Pliska: 100 godini arkheologicheski raspokpi* (Shumen, 1999); Rasho Rashev, 'Nachaloto na Pliska i na bălgarskoto Landnahmezeit', in *Zwischen Byzanz und Abendland: Pliska, der östliche Balkanraum und Europa im Spiegel der Frühmittelalterarchäologie*, ed. by Joachim Henning (Frankfurt a.M., 1999), pp. 17–18; Joachim Henning, 'Vom Herrschaftszentrum zur städtischen Großsiedlung mit agrarischer Komponente: Archäologische Nachweise der Landwirtschaft aus dem frühmittelalterlichen Pliska', *Pliska-Preslav*, 8 (2000), 74–86. See also Stancho Stanchev, 'L'architecture militaire et civile de Pliska et de Preslav à la lumière

primitive, have little in common with the building traditions in the Balkans. Their plain earth embankments and ditches reflect Slavo-Bulgarian building traditions, which made extensive use of turf and timber. It is quite evident that such fortifications were not very well built for the intended purpose, namely to control the neighbouring territories. Instead, they illustrate the power and prestige associated with the ability of the khan to concentrate resources and labour for the swift execution of the building program. By the mid-ninth century, this mobilization had been made possible by the permanent threat of invasion from Byzantium. No other form of fortification could better represent this highly centralized system of political power.

The conversion to Christianity in 864 triggered a number of important social and political changes. Of interest here is the transformation of the defence system. During the late ninth century, the old earthworks were abandoned and new fortifications were built of stone. Some were sited within the area formerly dominated by earthworks, either along the main road or along the right bank of the Danube. Others were built to the east and to the west of the main road. They may have been designed to protect two new roads, one running in parallel to the main one, the other in the west–east direction.⁹ It is important to note that no stone fort was built on top of or within older earthworks. Without exception, the new forts were located next to older ones, often on high cliffs along the banks of the Danube and of small rivers in the interior. A certain concern may be identified, namely to make the most of features of natural fortification in the landscape. Landings with steep slopes and sheer cliffs were preferred. When compared with the distribution of older earthworks, the new stone forts indicate a much greater concern with efficient defence.

The irregularity of naturally fortified landings determined the shape and size of the new fortresses. The inner area of each varies between 5 and 7.4 acres (3 to 6 ha). There is no regularity in the arrangement of towers and gates. The main entrance is often on the most accessible side, a simple passageway in the wall, sometimes protected by a gate tower. In addition, towers were built on the exposed ramparts, but there are also fortresses with no towers at all. Where towers exist, they tend to be massive stone works, different from towers commonly used for early Byzantine forts. In most cases, the walls of the fortress lack foundations, having been built directly on the ground after some preliminary levelling. The walls are made of irregularly shaped stones bound with adobe. There are cases in which walls basically look like earthen ramparts with stone facing on each side. All around and outside the fort, there is normally a moat. There are therefore certain similarities between the new fortresses and the older earthworks.

de nouvelles données', in *Actes du XII^e Congrès international d'études byzantines: Ochride, 10–16 septembre 1961*, vol. III (Belgrade, 1964), pp. 345–52.

⁹ Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, pp. 129–47.

The area enclosed by ramparts has been completely explored in the case of the Skala fort¹⁰ and only partially in two other cases, Car Asen¹¹ and Khuma.¹² Small trial excavations and field surveys on other sites produced additional evidence. On this basis, it can be concluded, albeit cautiously, that the inner area was occupied mainly by simple, sunken-floored houses with stone ovens or hearths. This is the most common type of house in the Lower Danube region during the early Middle Ages.¹³ Only occasionally would houses be built of thin walls directly above ground. Such houses seem to date to the final phase of occupation within forts.

In both cases, such houses were inhabited by people of modest economic means. In addition to houses, forts also included small churches, such as those excavated in Car Asen and Skala. The only example of an area built up with more impressive constructions is the Car Asen fort. Here, one of the fort's corners received extra walls, perhaps an inner enclosure. Due to the limited size of the excavation, it is not currently possible to decide whether or not this is some kind of residential building of special function. In most cases, open settlements existed in the immediate vicinity of these forts. In some cases, such settlements occupy areas much larger than that of the corresponding forts. Houses in these settlements are no different from those excavated within the forts.

Similar forts built within the ruins of older, early Byzantine forts were found at Capidava,¹⁴ Dionisopol near Balchik,¹⁵ and Abritus (Razgrad).¹⁶ There are no

¹⁰ Valeri Iotov and Georgi Atanasov, *Skala: Krepost ot X–XI vek do s. Kladenci, Tervelsko* (Sofia, 1998).

¹¹ V. Dimova, 'Rannosrednovekovnata krepost do selo Car Asen, Silistrensko (Krepostni săorăzheniia, zhilishchna i cārkovna arkhitektura)', *Dobrudzha*, 10 (1993), 54–75.

¹² Rasho Rashev and Stanislav Stanilov, *Starobălgarsko ukrepeno selishte pri s. Khuma, Razgradski okrăg* (Sofia, 1987). Equally interesting, but less typical, is the Durankulak fort on the Black Sea shore. See Henrieta Todorova, 'Arkitektura na srednovekovnata selishte', in *Durankulak*, ed. by Henrieta Todorova (Sofia, 1989), pp. 49–53.

¹³ Ivana Pleinerová, 'Zu den frühslawischen Grubenhäusern', in *Rapports du III^e Congrès international d'archéologie slave: Bratislava 7–14 septembre 1975*, ed. by B. Chropovský, vol. I (Bratislava, 1979), pp. 629–37; Zhivka Văzharova, 'Srednevekovye zhilishcha na territorii Bolgarii (po arkheologicheskim dannym)', *Slovenská Archeológia*, 34 (1986), 261–78. See also Boško Babić, 'Beitrag zur Erforschung des altslawischen Hauses auf der Balkanhalbinsel', *Balcanoslavica*, 2 (1973), 51–57, and Peter Šalkovský, 'Príspevok k studiu formálneho a časopriestorového vyvoja včasnოსlovenského obydlia', *Slavia Antiqua*, 38 (1996), 95–103.

¹⁴ Grigore Florescu, Radu Florescu, and Petre Diaconu, *Capidava I* (Bucharest, 1958). For subsequent excavations on the site, see Grigore Florescu and Radu Florescu, 'Săpăturile arheologice de la Capidava', *Materiale și cercetări arheologice*, 6 (1960), 617–27; Grigore Florescu, Radu Florescu, and Gloria Ceacalopol, 'Săpăturile arheologice de la Capidava', *Materiale și cercetări arheologice*, 7 (1961), 571–81; Gloria Ceacalopol, 'Săpăturile arheologice de la Capidava', *Materiale și cercetări arheologice*, 8 (1962), 699–708; Radu Florescu, 'Date noi de la Capidava', *Apulum*, 6 (1967), 258–68; Radu Florescu and Nicolae Cheluță-Georgescu, 'Săpăturile de la Capidava', *Pontica*, 7 (1974), 417–35.

¹⁵ Marin Dimitrov, *Balchik 2600* (Balchik, 1992).

¹⁶ Unpublished results.

significant differences between such 'rebuilt' forts and those located in previously uninhabited areas.

The absence of coin or metal artefacts makes the precise dating of these forts very difficult. The building of the only fort completely excavated so far, namely that of Skala, is coin-dated to the early tenth century.¹⁷ This conclusion is substantiated by evidence from other forts. Under such circumstances, it is particularly difficult to explain the appearance of these fortified sites. One possibility is to view them as a reaction to the devastating Magyar raids of 894 and 895, during the Byzantine-Bulgarian war.¹⁸ Such an explanation, however, does not take into account that the Magyars moved into the Middle Danube region after 896 and the raids against Bulgaria ceased. At least, nothing is known about Magyar raids in subsequent decades. It is naturally quite possible that the Magyar raids simply accelerated a process of fort building that had begun much earlier. In any case, the forts were abandoned during the second half of the tenth or the first quarter of the eleventh century, most likely in the circumstances surrounding the conquest of eastern Bulgaria by Emperor John Tzimiskes or the Pecheneg raids of 1036 and 1048/9.

The new system of fortifications has hitherto been examined as a stage in the evolution of defences. It is true that in comparison with earlier earthworks the stone fortresses represent a more advanced technique of fortification building. Shrinking the area enclosed by walls and making extensive use of stone for walls and towers are undoubtedly major improvements. As a whole, they signalize a new system of fortification. The main question that remains to be discussed is how this system came into existence: was it a result of decisions made by the central power to implement a program of defence, or was it a process, a gradual development without any relation to the central power? The latter possibility seems to be confirmed by several facts. Above all, these are fortified, but not necessarily military sites. Primarily houses occupy the inner area. There are no barracks or other buildings that might have served the garrison or the commanders. Moreover, the remains of large, open settlements outside the ramparts indicate a considerable concentration of civilian population. Traces of such settlements have also been found at some distance from the forts. Fortresses thus appear as regional centres with economic but no military

¹⁷ Iotov and Atanasov, *Skala*, p. 135: coin of Emperor Leo VI (886–912).

¹⁸ Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, pp. 173–74. For the Byzantine-Bulgarian war, see Gh. I. Brătianu, 'Le commerce bulgare dans l'Empire byzantin et le monopole de l'empereur Léon VI à Thessalonique', in *Sbornik v pamet na Prof. Petăr Nikov*, ed. by Sv. Georgiev, V. Beshevliev, and I. Duichev (Sofia, 1940), pp. 30–36; Genoveva Cankova-Petkova, 'Der erste Krieg zwischen Bulgarien und Byzanz unter Simeon und die Wiederaufnahme der Handelsbeziehungen zwischen Bulgarien und Konstantinopel', *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 3 (1968), 80–113; J. Karayannopoulos, 'Les causes des luttes entre Syméon et Byzance: un réexamen', in *Sbornik v chest na akad. Dimităr Angelov*, ed. by Velizar Velkov, Zhivko Aladzhov, Georgi Bakalov, and others (Sofia, 1994), pp. 52–64; Philippos Philippou, 'Hoi Vyzantino-Voulgarikes scheseis epi Symeon (894–913)', *Byzantiaka*, 16 (1996), 265–94.

functions. Their appearance was accompanied by several other changes in the fortification and settlement system of the region. For example, during the first half of the tenth century, the Stone Dike was erected in central Dobrudja, along the line of the older Great Earthen Dike.¹⁹ Both defensive lines clearly illustrate the change in fortification techniques and a paramount concern with protecting the core area of medieval Bulgaria against attacks from the north. At about the same time, several early Byzantine forts in north-eastern Bulgaria were restored, after being abandoned ever since the late 500s or early 600s. The general impression is one of population growth, most evident in the expansion of settlements, both fortified and open.²⁰

In these changes the most important role seems to have been assigned to the forts. Most likely, the initiative to build such settlements was not that of the central power in Pliska or Preslav, unlike the situation of earthworks in the previous century. Forts were most likely the result of local initiatives. They may thus be treated as local community centres. If so, then their appearance signalizes the disintegration of the old military organization under the direct control of the khan, and its substitution with a new structure, in which local initiatives prevailed. Local leaders may have played a comparatively more important role than the khan, now that their fortified residences became centres of regional clusters of open settlements. The nature of the power relations between these leaders and the local population remains unclear. But it is obvious that the settlement expansion of the tenth century indicates the disappearance of tribal centres and the appearance of territorial communities, a process much encouraged by the conversion to Christianity. In other words, this process was associated with the fading away of both the strongly centralized system of government of the early 800s and the tribal division of society. The conversion to Christianity and the demographic growth of the early tenth century replaced previous developments and helped establish new social relations in a political environment marked by decentralization. This is particularly true for Pliska. Several large estates appeared in the early 900s in an area until then viewed as the exclusive domain of the khan. This may well reflect a much more profound change, whereby the old military and administrative aristocracy of the ninth century was now turning into land nobility. This transformation increased the degree of local autonomy, at both group and individual level. The new trend of social development led to a rapid weakening

¹⁹ See note 7 above. For the dating of the Stone Dike, see Uwe Fiedler, 'Zur Datierung der Langwälle an der mittleren und unteren Donau', *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt*, 16 (1986), 457–65; Florin Curta, 'The Cave and the Dyke: A Rock Monastery on the Tenth-Century Frontier of Bulgaria', *Studia monastica*, 41 (1999), 129–49. For a much later date, see Petre Diaconu, 'Zur Frage der Datierung des Steinwalles in der Dobrudscha und der Lokalisierung der im Berichte des griechischen Toparchen geschilderten Ereignisse', *Dacia*, 6 (1962), 317–35.

²⁰ Georgi Atanasov, 'Etnodemografski promeni v Dobrudzha (X–XVI v.)', *Istoricheski pregled*, 47.2 (1991), 75–89, and 'Etnodemografski i etnokulturni procesi po dobrudzhanskoto Chernomorie prez srednovekovieto', *Istoricheski pregled*, 52.2 (1996), 3–30.

of the authority of the central government. The hallmark of this social crisis in Bulgaria was the rise of the Bogomil heresy in the mid-900s.²¹ It is quite possible that the invasion of Bulgaria, first by Prince Svyatoslav of Kiev, then by the Byzantine emperor John Tzimiskes (971), was successful precisely because of the combined results of decentralization and dramatic social crisis, both of which weakened the possibility of military riposte.

It is important to note that in neighbouring Byzantium something in the nature of a reverse process was taking place at the same time. By 900, forts located to the south of the Erkessia Dike were rebuilt, after being abandoned *c.* 600. Some have argued that this must have been a reaction to Bulgarian developments, as very similar material culture categories (pottery) are to be found both in these forts and in those of north-eastern Bulgaria.²² However, the building techniques and materials used are undoubtedly different and of undisputed Byzantine origin. Unlike the new fortresses of the north-east, those in Thrace were all built on top of ruins of much earlier date, strictly following the original plan. In other words, the Thracian forts are more likely to testify to preparations for war with Bulgaria. At the time, the Bulgarian fortification system was characterized by increased decentralization, while Byzantium made extensive use of refurbished forts on sites already used for military purposes in the 500s. This policy ultimately secured the success of the Byzantine armies and the conquest of Bulgaria.

²¹ For the Bogomil heresy, see the many works of Dimităr Angelov. Most important in this context are 'Der Bogomilismus in Bulgarien', *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 3 (1975), 34–54; *Bogomilstvoto v Bălgariia* (Sofia, 1980); 'Aproximacion a la naturaleza y la historia del bogomilismo en Bulgaria', in *Herejías y sociedades en la Europa preindustrial, siglos XI–XVIII: Comunicaciones y debates del Coloquio de Royaumont (1962) presentados por Jacques Le Goff* (*Historia de los Movimientos Sociales*) (Madrid, 1987), pp. 51–56; *Il bogomilismo: Un'eresia medievale bulgara* (Rome, 1990); 'Das Bogomilentum – Ursprung und Wesen', in *Bulgaristik-Symposium Marburg*, ed. by Wolfgang Gesemann, Kyrill Haralampieff, and Helmut Schaller (Munich, 1990), pp. 1–18; 'Le bogomilisme: envergure bulgare et européenne', *Heresis*, 19 (1992), 1–18.

²² Dimcho Aladzhov, 'Kreposti i selishta v Iugoiztochna Bălgariia po vreme na părvata bălgarska dărzhava', in *Arkitekturatata na Părvata i Vtorata bălgarska dărzhava* (Sofia, 1975), pp. 121–35 and 328–44.

Moving Earth and Making Difference: Dikes and Frontiers in Early Medieval Bulgaria

PAOLO SQUATRITI

At the beginning of the second millennium, when writing was becoming an increasingly ordinary medium in Bulgaria, an anonymous Bulgarian author penned an account of Bulgar history.¹ The so-called *Vision of Isaiah* or *Apocryphal Bulgarian Chronicle* tells of the seminal event in early Bulgar history, the crossing of the Danube in 681 under the leadership of ‘tsar Ispar’, presumably identifiable with Khan Asparuch.² This historical narrative is one of very few detailed reconstructions of the Bulgar past not produced in Byzantium and has special meaning on account of this peculiarity. Other historical texts, like the far earlier Bulgar *List of Princes*, which at least did mention Asparuch’s frontier-crossing exploit and was, exceptionally, not made in Byzantium, are mute in comparison to

¹ In what follows, I adopt the distinction of Charles Halperin and others between Bulgars (the pastoral people, many of steppe origins, who settled Scythia Minor and Lower Moesia in the 680s) and Bulgarians (the Christian, Slavic-tongued people whom the Bulgars became in the ninth and tenth centuries). See Ch. J. Halperin, ‘Bulgars and Slavs in the First Bulgarian Empire: A Reconsideration of the Historiography’, *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 3 (1983), 183–200.

² Bulgarian scholars have few doubts about this identification. See Vasil Giuzelev, ‘Chan Asparuch und die Gründung des bulgarischen Reiches’, *Mitteilungen des Bulgarischen Forschungsinstitut in Österreich*, 6 (1984), 27–43. The *Vision* is variously dated between c. 1000 and 1100, but there is agreement that its author was a Bogomil sympathizer. See *Bălgarski apokrifieu lătopisu*, in Iordan Ivanov, *Bogomilski knigi i legendi* (Sofia, 1925), pp. 273–80, for the text. On early history-writing in Bulgaria, see Robert Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria: A Comparative Study across the Early Medieval Frontier* (Berkeley, 1975), pp. 183–84; Ivan Duichev, ‘Una pagina della civiltà bulgara nel medioevo’, *Europa Orientalis*, 14 (1934), 5–7. On the *Vision*’s western career, see Bernard Hamilton, ‘Wisdom from the East: The Reception by the Cathars of Eastern Dualist Texts’, in *Heresy and Literacy, 1000–1530*, ed. by Peter Biller and Anne Hudson (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 52–53.

the *Vision*.³ For the well-informed author of the *Vision*, the 'tsar' was a true prodigy, a great hero of early times, fully able to rule the Bulgars by age three, and able to hold onto power for another 172 years thereafter. In this idealized re-creation of past leadership, Asparuch was remembered also as a builder of cities, two of which, Drăstăr on the Danube and Pliska, the early capital, were singled out and named. This precocious and munificent lord was further celebrated as a killer of Muslims and an expeller of 'Ethiopians' from the land. Finally, Asparuch was heralded as a man responsible for constructing a protective embankment or a 'great ditch' (Old Church Slavonic *prezid*) from the Danube to the Black Sea.

The last detail, in a standardized and somewhat formulaic description of rulerly achievement and virtue, is more striking even than the plainly implausible record of Asparuch's 'ethnic cleansing'. In lauding rulers, especially those who cast themselves in a late Roman or Byzantine mould, it might be traditional to cite their military triumphs and service to the purity of the community. The construction of cities or their massive restoration are also perfectly normal heroics to be recorded for those with power, and indeed it is attributed to numerous other khans by the *Vision*.⁴ Dealing with dirt, digging ditches, instead, is seldom considered memorable. Yet it is a prominent part of one of the earliest circumstantial Bulgarian reconstructions of Bulgar rulership

³ Omeljan Pritsak, *Die bulgarische Fürstenliste und die Sprache der Protobulgaren* (Wiesbaden, 1955); Steven Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire* (London, 1930), p. 273, offers an English translation of the *List* and comments upon it in his 'The Bulgarian Princes' List', in *Ancient Bulgaria: Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Ancient History and Archaeology of Bulgaria, University of Nottingham, 1981*, ed. by A. G. Poulter (Nottingham, 1983), pp. 322–41. This text is thought to date from shortly after the death of the last khan it names, Umor, namely from about 770. A first redaction, made under Asparuch in the late seventh century (Duichev, 'Una pagina', pp. 6–7; Pritsak, *Die bulgarische Fürstenliste*, p. 48), indicates an early Bulgar interest in the historical record, in transferring to writing their oral memory. For an opposite view, see Mosko Dobre Moskov, *Imennik na bălgarskite khanove: novo tălkuvane* (Sofia, 1988).

⁴ B. Pferschy, 'Bauten und Baupolitik frühmittelalterlicher Könige', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 97 (1989), 289–93; Annette Nünnerich-Asmus, 'Strassen, Brücken und Bogen als Zeichen römischen Herrschaftsanspruchs', in *Denkmäler der Römerzeit*, ed. by Walter Trillmich, Henner von Hesberg, and Annette Nünnerich-Asmus (Mainz, 1993), pp. 121 and 128–39. See also Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 25, 46, and 136. Procopius's architectural eulogy of Justinian the builder is the classic text, but eighth-century Byzantines still celebrated rulers' buildings. See Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (Berkeley, 1985), pp. 89 and 110; Denis Roques, 'Les Constructions de Justinien de Procope de Césarée', *Antiquité tardive*, 8 (2000), 31–43; Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500–700* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 151–52. For the eighth century, see *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: The Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, ed. by Averil Cameron and Judith Herrin (Leiden, 1984), p. 58.

and of who the Bulgars were and how they came to find themselves in the Balkans. Alongside the more traditional glories in the foundation myths of the Bulgar state, and not subordinate to them, went the prowess of the leaders as dike-makers. It is fair to say, then, that from very early on ditches were part of Bulgar history.

Given such centrality in the rather limited textual evidence on early Bulgaria, it is no marvel that several monumental ditches attributed to the early Middle Ages lie on the soil occupied by the Bulgars after the seventh century.⁵ Both archaeologists and historians have investigated these impressive structures.⁶ Seeking some certainty in the dating of the fosses, a special kind of monument without habitation levels, obvious marks of 'style', and many other of the customary chronological clues, recourse is often made to written sources to bolster an attribution. Various geopolitical contexts are also used, deductively, to explain the presence of the trenches. In consequence, widely different interpretations of the earthworks' dating and purpose have developed. This essay elucidates these scholarly interpretations of Bulgaria's earthworks and proposes that scholars have yet to formulate satisfactory explanations of how and why the diggings developed.⁷

Bulgaria's Early Medieval Diggings

Since the beginning of the twentieth century at least, the surprising density on the ground of large-scale earthworks in Bulgaria has been the object of scholarly attention.⁸ Aside from several moats around Roman and late Roman settlements, far vaster incisions on the soil, linear in nature, have been catalogued. Unlike moats, designed to protect circumscribed, dense settlements, and therefore short, these earthen ramparts are long and seem to be addressed at vast territories with little settlement.⁹

⁵ Very extensive ditches are known in nearby areas too.

⁶ Rasho Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia na Dolniia Dunav (VII–XI v.)* (Varna, 1982) represents the most comprehensive synthesis. See Petăr Koledarov, *Politicheska geografiia na srednovekovnata bălgarska dărzava* (Sofia, 1979); Joëlle Napoli, *Recherches sur les fortifications linéaires romaines* (Rome, 1997), pp. 12, 16–19, 52–56, 102–09, and 341–55 on Dobrudja. See also Rasho Rashev, 'Remarks on the Archaeological Evidence of Forts and Fortified Settlements in Tenth-Century Bulgaria' (in this volume).

⁷ Some solutions to these puzzles are traced in Paolo Squatriti, 'Patrons, Landscape, and Potlatch', in *The Plume and the Palette: Essays in Honor of Josephine von Henneberg*, ed. by Pamela Berger, Jeffery Howe, and Susan A. Michalczyk (New York, 2001), pp. 159–71, and 'Digging Ditches in Early Medieval Europe', *Past and Present*, 176 (2002), 11–65.

⁸ Karel Škorpil, 'Retranchements et fortifications en terre', *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique russe à Constantinople*, 10 (1905), 503–43 and 558–69, first discussed the Bulgarian trenches as a whole.

⁹ Some are only a few kilometres or less, and lie across the mouths of small valleys draining into the sea. Uwe Fiedler, 'Zur Datierung der Langwälle an der mittleren und unteren

The banked ditches in question lie in eastern Bulgaria, the Bulgar 'heartland'. This area lay in the former Roman provinces of Moesia Inferior and Scythia Minor, a plain north of the Balkan mountains, south of the Danube, and fringed by the Black Sea. Some such dikes are placed across mountain defiles or plateaus in the Balkan range, close to passes and related to forts active in Roman and late antique times. With some exaggeration, scholars have woven the latter into a 'line of defence', a complex system of fortifications designed to hamper northerners' access to the Mediterranean.¹⁰ Still more medium-sized fosses exist along a few right-bank tributaries of the Danube, such as the Tutrakan dike or that leading south from Lom for some 20 km. These little-studied trenches range from 5 to more than 20 km in length.¹¹ Like the coastal and mountain structures, today their mounds are low and their ditches shallow. Even when their earth was freshly dug, it seems, they were unprepossessing. Their length and the lack of a discernible focus for their defensive emplacement sets them apart from the humdrum moats encircling Roman towns and forts. Almost all (even many of the Balkan mountain ones) are not connected to other fortifications or combat structures, though there are enclosures along the Tutrakan dike.

These large-scale excavations are the context in which to comprehend linear earthworks whose imposition on the landscape reaches a different scale altogether.

Donau', *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt*, 16 (1986), 460–61. Rasho Rashev, 'Zemlenata ukrepiteľna sistema na Părvoto bălgarsko carstvo', *Pliska-Preslav*, 2 (1981), 100–02, and Veselin Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode der bulgarischen Geschichte* (Amsterdam, 1981), pp. 475–76, produce scant evidence of the Bulgars' involvement in these structures. See also Karel Škorpil, 'Constructions militaires stratégiques dans la région de la Mer Noire', *Byzantinoslavica*, 3 (1931), 30.

¹⁰ Škorpil, 'Retranchements' and 'Constructions' argued for a coherent 'second line of defence' in the Balkans, behind the Danube one (followed by Rashev, 'Zemlenata ukrepiteľna sistema', p. 100). In reality, he found twenty-two distinct blockages on some trans-Haemus routes. See also Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, p. 478 and map 2; Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, p. 233; Koledarov, *Politicheska geografiia*, pp. 133–34.

¹¹ Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, p. 475; Rashev, 'Zemlenata ukrepiteľna sistema', pp. 100–01, and *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, p. 233; Koledarov, *Politicheska geografiia*, p. 134. See also Rasho Rashev, 'L'Onglos – témoignages écrits et faits archéologiques', *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 10 (1982), 71 and 72–75 (on some 40 km of ramparts at Niculițel). The Tutrakan dyke is distinguished by its complexity (it bifurcates) and the use of fortresses. On the minor dikes in south Dobrudja, see Constantin Scorpan, *Limes Scythiae: Topographical and Stratigraphical Research on the Late Roman Fortifications on the Lower Danube* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 3 and 116; Vasil Giuzelev, 'Die spätantike und frühmittelalterliche Stadt auf bulgarischem Territorium (6.–10. Jh.)', in *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Kultur Bulgariens zwischen Orient und Okzident: Referate gehalten im Rahmen eines gemeinsamen mit dem Bulgarischen Forschungsinstitut in Österreich organisierten Arbeitsgespräches vom 8. bis 10. November 1983*, ed. by Renate Pillinger (Vienna, 1986), p. 23, who gives opposite (i.e. Bulgar) attributions to them.

The two ditches in question are Pliska's 20-odd-km perimetral fosse and the multiple trenches stretching along some 50 km from east to west across the Dobrudja (now south-eastern Romania). Both of these structures have a monumentality which the humbler, shallower trenches scattered across the territory that the early medieval Bulgars controlled lack. However, as the smaller trenches show, the excavation of many millions of tons of soil to form artificial depressions and mounds was not too extraordinary in this part of the world.

The ditch 'from the Danube to the sea' to which the *Vision of Isaiah* refers is often identified on the ground in the complex series of linear fortifications that truncates the Dobrudja region, following the ample Carasu valley, between Constanța and Cernavodă (once known as Tomis and Axiopolis, respectively, the latter being an important place on the Lower Danube frontier of the Roman Empire).¹² Controversy has long surrounded the Dobrudjan earthworks. They were intriguing to locals even before the Prussian scholar von Moltke described them to his fellows in the 1830s and introduced them to scholarly debates in Western Europe. Prior to von Moltke, Dobrudjan opinion assigned the dikes to the period of Roman rule. They were held to have been a road or perhaps a military installation; the entire set was popularly called 'Valul lui Traian' or Trajan's trench (alternatively 'Troianul'). Many scholars of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries underlined the wisdom of this supposedly folk attribution, and disregarded the more non-committal Turkish names for the barriers (Big, Little, and Stone Barrier). Thus the Trajanic name became scholarly proof of the antiquity of the defences. Yet prominent modification of the landscape always attracts attention, and the process of forming a shared understanding of such landscape alterations often involves 'great men' like remote Roman emperors. In fact, the association between historic leaders somehow connected with the locale and significant changes in the appearance of the place is often unsubstantiated, a knee-jerk reaction to the implicit question posed by the landscape monuments. But the legitimate doubts about the Trajanic origins of the Dobrudjan dikes which have been raised in the twentieth century do not deprive the process whereby land changes become expressions of past rulers' domination of its fascination. The varying interpretations of the three ditches' linear defences in the Dobrudja reveal how magnetic such structures are, and how they draw unto themselves interest and interests. In the Dobrudjan case the interests behind Trajanic or non-Roman attributions are national.¹³

¹² Between the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 and 1940, the entire region was in Romania. After 1940, the southernmost area went to Bulgaria. See Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* (Seattle, 1993), pp. 84 and 136. The linear defensive works of Dobrudja became known to Western European scholarship during the road and railway construction projects of the mid-1800s (when the region was part of the Ottoman Empire), and excited great interest during World War I (when Dobrudja was occupied by the Central Powers).

¹³ The Danube basin and Romania are peppered with ditch- and mound-like structures popularly referred to as 'Trajan's', e.g., the earthwork between the Siret and the Prut River in

Part of the reason for the passionate interest people have developed for the three linear fortifications, two earthen and one earthen but topped with a masonry wall, is that they stick out in their landscape.¹⁴ Low limestone hills with few trees and little water (even the Carasu River itself does not amount to much) constitute the landscape of Dobrudja, an area that interjects itself abruptly in the lowlands traversed by the Danube just before the mighty river loses itself into the Black Sea. Repulsed by these highlands, the river turns northward, eventually finding an estuary in the depression between the Carpathian Mountains and the northern rim of the Dobrudja. Thus the Dobrudja is a tableland encircled by water, with the Danube on its western and northern edges, and the Black Sea to the east; only in the southern portion of the region, where the hills are lower and the more numerous plateaux blend into the Bulgarian plain near Shumen and Pliska, are Dobrudja's limits vaguer.

In this distinctive area, ancient Romans could feel out of place. Ovid, exiled in the coastal city of Tomis (now Constanța), found the hilly environs desolate, cold, and

the vicinity of Galați, one in the Republic of Moldova (Bessarabia) near the Dniester River, a third called Brazda lui Novac (Ditch of the Giant Novac), all with Trajanic associations in folklore. See G. Tocilescu, *Fouilles et recherches archéologiques en Roumanie: Communications faites à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres de Paris, 1892–1899* (Bucharest, 1900), pp. 118 and 155; Ioan Barnea and Radu Vulpe, *Romanii la Dunărea de Jos* (Bucharest, 1968), p. 113; Kurt Horedt, 'Zur Frage der Datierung der grossen Erdwälle im Karpatenbecken', *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*, 16 (1968), 39–54; Radu Vulpe, 'Les "valla" de la Valachie, de la Basse-Moldavie et du Boudjak', in *Actes du IX^e Congrès international d'études sur les frontières romaines, Mamaia 6–13 sept. 1972*, ed. by D. M. Pippidi (Bucharest, 1974), p. 267; Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, pp. 28–30; Fiedler, 'Zur Datierung', pp. 457–58; Napoli, *Recherches*, pp. 78–82. Radu Vulpe, *Le vallum de la Moldavie inférieure et le 'mur' d'Atharic* (The Hague, 1957), pp. 6 and 21, notes that beginning with the 1400s, Moldavian charters call all these earthworks 'Troian' as they use them as boundary markers and makes the important remark that the change to 'Traian' (Trajan) is a scholarly invention of recent times. Troian is also a Romanian folk hero capable of superhuman achievements, so Troianul may have nothing to do with classical Antiquity. Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, p. 28 (following Dimităr Krandzhalov, 'Le système de défense du limes romain sur le Bas-Danube et le rôle de la forteresse d'Aboba-Pliska', *Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis, Facultas Philosophica. Historica*, 15 (1971), 23), accuses the eighteenth-century Prince of Moldavia, Demetrius Cantemir, of inventing the Roman associations for Bessarabia's trenches. H. Gajewska, *Topographie des fortifications romaines en Dobrudja* (Wrocław, 1974), p. 27, suggests an alternative etymology ('Traian' might derive from a Romanian verb supposedly meaning 'to protect'), but is herself sceptical of it. It appears that only since the nineteenth century and its nationalisms, when European savants became interested in the structures, has the Roman emperor found room in the explanations of the Romanian peasantry (but also of Bulgarian peasants, according to Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, p. 71).

¹⁴ A striking image of these structures is the crisp aerial photograph taken by the German air force in 1918 and, somewhat strangely, published in *Antiquity*, 28 (1954), plate VII, with no obvious relation to any text in the volume.

dangerous, a featureless tundra. There were few comparable places in the Mediterranean world. Still, such alien emptiness could be manipulated, as when the Emperor Trajan sought to *use* this incongruous landscape to celebrate his conquering prowess. His vast marble monument at Adamclisi (then appropriately called Tropaeum Traiani) gained prominence and legibility from the barren surroundings, especially as it stood almost 40 m high. Like a lighthouse from the sea, the trophy was (and its modern successor, a replica, is) visible from miles around. The Emperor Constantine, a genius of propaganda, understood this well: he restored the trophy as part of his effort to bolster the region's Roman identity. For the Dobrudja's landscape was not just an oddity in the Romans' Mediterranean world; it also was uniquely suited to inscribe large-scale message upon.¹⁵

The Carasu valley provides variety in the monotony of rounded hills and small plateaus of the Dobrudja. It separates the north of the region, higher and with more hills, from the lower (seldom more than 200 m above sea level) and flatter tableland of the south. The valley is a convenient route for travellers on an east–west course, and one much frequented in Antiquity. The Dobrudjan dikes follow this valley for some 70 km in a more or less continuous ribbon along its southern lip. While the dikes tend to keep a respectful distance from each other, in some segments of their courses they intersect and become embroiled like contorting snakes. Where they superimpose on one another, the linear ramparts also erase each other. This confusion provides important chronological clues, clarifying the 'relative chronology' of the structures.¹⁶ The wall-peaked dike that is today the most visible of the three is universally considered to be the youngest, as its course consistently overwhelms those of the earthworks, without ever itself giving way to the ditches or embankments of the two other dikes. Two of the forts just behind this rampart were built directly over the simple earthworks.¹⁷ But the 'absolute chronology', or dates for the

¹⁵ Radu Vulpe, *The Ancient History of Dobrudja* (Bucharest, 1940), p. 70; Paul McKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak* (Chapel Hill, 1975), pp. 95–97, on Trajan's trophy as it lies in the land. A. Aricescu, *The Army in Dobrudja* (Oxford, 1980), p. 90, on Constantine's restoration of the monument.

¹⁶ Gheorghe Papuc, 'Despre valorile dobrogene', *Pontica*, 25 (1992), 328, dissents on this subject, proposing that the Great earthwork was built after the Stone-capped one because the dike made the stone wall superfluous.

¹⁷ Petre Diaconu, 'Zur Frage der Datierung des Steinwalles in der Dobrudscha und der Lokalisierung der im Berichte des griechischen Toparchen geschilderten Ereignisse', *Dacia*, 6 (1962), 318–20 and 322–23; Barnea and Vulpe, *Romanii la Dunărea de Jos*, p. 387; G. Forni and others, 'Limes', in *Dizionario epigrafico di antichità romane*, vol. iv, ed. G. de Ruggiero (Rome, [n.d.]), col. 1280; Fiedler, 'Zur Datierung', p. 457. Tocilescu, *Fouilles*, pp. 165 and 173, and Carl Schuchhardt, 'Die Anastasiusmauer bei Constantinopel und die Dobrudscha-Wälle', *Jahrbuch des kaiserlich-deutschen archäologischen Instituts*, 16 (1901), 117–20, and 'Die sogenannten Trajanswälle in der Dobrudscha', *Abhandlungen der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, 12 (1918), 9–10, were the first to note the relevance of the superimpositions.

construction, of this great wall remains contentious, and the discovery in the 1950s and publication thereafter of pottery and inscriptions indicating that the masonry defence was built and used in the tenth century did not placate all doubts: there is still much uncertainty over whether it was a Bulgarian or Byzantine structure.¹⁸ Trial excavations and field surveys along the Carasu valley, related to the construction of a Danube-Black Sea navigable canal, one of Communist Romania's grand public works, turned up surprising amounts of late antique and early Byzantine material, as well as much more consistent finds from the early Middle Ages, especially the 900s. This has rendered dating more problematic, with some scholars imagining two distinct construction and use stages, with the wall as a tenth-century superimposition on a fifth- or sixth-century earthwork. In the current consensus, the wall-capped dike dates from the mid-tenth century.¹⁹

This walled dike's history is limpid compared to the simpler earthworks'. The latter are likelier candidates to be Khan Asparuch's 'great ditch' as described in the *Vision of Isaiah* and indeed it is these earthen barriers to which readers of the text have turned in search of confirmation of its words. Since their 'discovery' in the nineteenth century, scholars have labelled one of the two earthworks 'Great' and the other 'Small' because of their different scales. Nor is the depth of the ditch or the height of the mound the single distinction, for the 'Small' earthwork has a considerably longer and more leisurely course, and it has a single ditch on the north side (the shallower ditch to the south is negligible enough in most parts that scholars think it served mainly to make more soil available for the mound). Furthermore, the ditch of the lesser dike is V-shaped, not flat-bottomed, the result of a conscious

¹⁸ Even Diaconu, who first underlined the significance of these finds, has argued for both hypotheses; see Diaconu, 'Zur Frage der Datierung', pp. 322–23, and Emil Condurachi, Ioan Barnea, and Petre Diaconu, 'Nouvelles recherches sur le Limes byzantin du Bas-Danube aux x^e–xi^e siècles', in *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies: Oxford, 5–10 September 1966*, ed. by J. M. Hussey, D. Obolensky, and S. Runciman (London, 1967), pp. 188–89. Diaconu is the Romanian exception to the rule that Romanian scholars, who formerly asserted the wall's Romanness, now contend it is Byzantine. Bulgarian scholars have resisted the Byzantine attribution and prefer Bulgar contexts for the wall's execution. C. Patsch, 'Die römische Grenzwehr der Balkanhalbinsel an der Donau', *Revue internationale d'études balkaniques*, 2 (1935), 92, thought Constantine built it; Schuchhardt, 'Die Anastasiusmauer', pp. 119–20, thought it unworthy of 'einer guten grossen Zeit', and ascribed it to the fourth century. Škorpil, 'Constructions', p. 29, eventually decided it was late antique. The most recent compendious treatment (Napoli, *Recherches*, pp. 357–58) is agnostic.

¹⁹ Ioana Bogdan-Căţănicu, 'I valli di Traiano nella Dobrugia: Considerazioni sulle fotografie aeree', in *Omaggio a Dinu Adameşteanu*, ed. by Marius Porumb (Cluj-Napoca, 1996), pp. 201–26. The most authoritative Bulgarian voice is Rasho Rashev, 'Les vallums de Dobrudža dans le développement de la fortification ancienne bulgare', in *Dobrudža: Etudes ethno-culturelles. Recueil d'articles*, ed. by Dimităr Angelov (Sofia, 1987), pp. 48–56, who thinks the walled dike is an early tenth-century culmination of Bulgarian fortification art. I am grateful to Florin Curta for explaining these issues to me.

stylistic choice by the diggers (digging style is usually determined by soil type and need for solidity, or by strategic considerations, not by whim). The Small earthwork is also characterized by the total absence of fortification, while there are some sixty-three forts and several apertures along the 54 km of the Great earthwork. Despite so many differences, either of the two could be Asparuchian, for both delve from the Danube to the Black Sea, though both have long gaps where natural or other obstructions discouraged digging, something the *Vision* writer tactfully neglected to mention, if indeed either (or both) of these dikes was what he had in mind as he wrote.²⁰

As with the masonry wall, so with the two Dobrudjan dikes the consistent superimposition of the Great earthwork over the Small in all points where they intersect has furnished incontestable evidence that the Great earthwork was made after the Small one. But there agreement ends. Whereas some have given the lesser dike pre-Roman construction dates, others have assigned it to Asparuch and the late seventh century AD. Between these extremes many other dates have been suggested.²¹ In this scholarly debate much is made of the location of the ditch in relation to the rampart.

²⁰ Napoli, *Recherches*, p. 11, offers a useful typology of ditches. V-shaped ditches are more stable, less prone to erosion, but not as deep and wide as ditches with a flat bottom. Detailed (but not always consistent) descriptions of the Dobrudjan dikes are in Tocilescu, *Fouilles*, pp. 155–57 and 166–74; Schuchhardt, ‘Die Anastasiusmauer’, pp. 117–20, and ‘Die sogenannten Trajanswälle’, pp. 11–12 and 23–29; Vulpe, *Ancient History*, pp. 122–25; Napoli, *Recherches*, pp. 53–56, 102–04, and 341–59. Emil Condurachi, ‘Neue Probleme und Ergebnisse der Limesforschung in Scythia Minor’, in *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms: Vorträge des 6. Internationalen Limeskongresses in Süddeutschland* (Cologne, 1967), p. 173, claims the southern, shallower ditch of the ‘Great earthwork’ was not contemporary with the rest of the structure, but was built afterwards by people with different tactical goals from the original builders’. Rashev, ‘Les vallums de Dobrudža’, p. 53, disagrees. Florin Curta, ‘The Cave and the Dyke: A Rock Monastery on the Tenth-Century Frontier of Bulgaria’, *Studia monastica*, 41 (1999), 145 with n. 104, objects that some of the gaps in the ramparts are recent innovations; but Michel’s 1855 plan is not as reliable as he believes. It is as much the product of an ‘Orientalist’ sensibility as Michel’s text, where great efforts are made to find solid western civilization beneath the East’s later, tattered, decadent, surfaces.

²¹ The Thracians are mentioned by Dimităr Krundzhalov, ‘Sur la théorie erronée de l’origine protobulgare de la cité près d’Aboba (Pliska)’, in *Actes du XII^e Congrès international d’études byzantines: Ochride, 10–16 septembre 1961*, vol. III (Belgrade, 1964), p. 194, and also, ‘Le système de défense’, accepting Schuchhardt’s view (‘Die sogenannten Trajanswälle’, p. 11) that the lesser dike is prehistoric. Barnea and Vulpe, *Romanii la Dunărea de Jos*, pp. 75, 107, 113, 133, and 388, give caustic commentary on the various dating efforts, from prehistory to the ‘feudal epoch’, with which they disagree. Gajewska, *Topographie*, pp. 28–30, gives a good summary of interpretations. Influential efforts include those by Škorpil, Tocilescu, and Condurachi. See also A. Frova, ‘The Danubian limes in Bulgaria and the Excavations at Oescus’, in *The Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, 1949* (London, 1952), pp. 25–26; I. Duichev, ‘Dobrudža’, in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. III (Munich, 1986), col. 1152; Bogdan-Cătănciu, ‘I valli di Traiano’, pp. 205–07, who is justly hesitant in dating.

As the Small earthwork's ditch lies south of the rampart, whoever built the structure is supposed to have been worried about enemies in the south, presumably Romans or Byzantines.²² This is one of the pillars of the Asparuchian attribution for the lesser dike, for the Bulgars are thought to have lived along the Danube for an interlude before spilling over its banks into Byzantium in 681. To substantiate this Bulgar claim of authorship, the cryptic words of the early ninth-century Byzantine monk Theophanes are often invoked. He described an 'Onglos' where an impenetrable series of barriers and defences were used by the Bulgars to protect themselves from a Byzantine punitive expedition launched by Constantine IV in 680–81. But Theophanes does not refer to any artificial defences in this Bulgar redoubt, and the 'Onglos', whatever it was, was surrounded by rivers and marshes, not necessarily by ditches and ramparts.²³ Moreover, Roman dikes do not always use the ditch as an impediment in *front* of the earth rampart, and in the cases of the *Fossatum Africae* in Morocco and the Roman *limes* in Rhaetia, as well as Hadrian's famous English wall, a ditch lies on the 'Roman' side of the defensive embankment, a concealed trap into which over-enthusiastic climbers of the rampart could roll. This implies that the

²² This is the kind of argument advanced by Diaconu, 'Zur Frage der Datierung', p. 322; Vulpe, 'Les "valla" de la Valachie', p. 268; Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniiia*, p. 121.

²³ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 6171, ed. by C. de Boor, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1883), pp. 357–59 (= *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, trans. by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997), pp. 497–99), to whom Patriarch Nicephorus's *Breviary*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1880), p. 34 (= *Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople Short History*, ed. and trans. Cyril Mango (Washington, 1990), p. 89) adds only cliffs. Moses of Corene, *Géographie d'après Ptolémée*, ed. and trans. by P. Soukry (Venice, 1851), p. 20 (see now *The Geography of Ananias of Širak: Ašxarhac'oyc', the Long and Short Recensions*, ed. and trans. by Robert H. Hewsen (Wiesbaden, 1992), p. 48), indicates Asparuch lived north of the Danube. Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, pp. 174–78, and Peter Soustal, *Thrakien (Thrace, Rodope und Haimimontus)*, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, 6 (Vienna, 1991), pp. 76–77, have sensible overviews of the 'Onglos' *vexata quaestio*. Though some Bulgarian scholars, following Vasil Zlatarski on this, locate the Onglos south of the Danube at Niculițel (e.g. Ivan Duichev, *Medioevo bizantino-slavo*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1965), pp. 100–02; Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniiia*, pp. 20–27, and Rashev, 'L'Onglos – témoignages écrits', 68–79, who thinks this Onglos was part of a vast set of concentric earthworks around Asparuchian Bulgaria from Ukraine to Thrace), most scholars think the Onglos lay between the Dniester and the Danube rivers, better corresponding to Theophanes' description of events: J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I (A.D. 802–867)* (London, 1912), pp. 332 and 339, is an exception. Ion Barnea, 'Dobrogea între anii 681–1186', in *Din istoria Dobrogei*, vol. III, ed. by Ion Barnea and Ștefan Ștefănescu (Bucharest, 1971), lists archaeological reasons for excluding the Bulgars from Niculițel's construction. For the Onglos, see also Petre Diaconu, 'Unde trebuie căutat Onglos?', *Istros*, 7 (1994), 359–66; Alexandru Madgearu, 'Recent Discussions about "Onglos"', in *Istro-Pontica: Muzeul tulcean la a 50-a aniversare 1950–2000. Omagiu lui Simion Gavrilă la 45 de ani de activitate, 1955–2000*, ed. by Mihaela Iacob, Ernest Oberländer-Târnoaveanu, and Florin Topoleanu (Tulcea, 2000), pp. 343–48.

lesser Dobrudjan earthwork cannot a priori be declared pre- or anti-Roman on the basis of the location of its ditch. In fact, Napoli has shown that there are strategic and stylistic reasons to think the lesser earthwork was a fourth-century Roman installation, and that it was built as part of a system of defence in depth extending north of the Danube to protect one of the 'highways' through which barbarians could enter Rome's territory. This is also the belief of those who have studied early twentieth-century aerial photographs of the structures and noted pronounced similarities of the layouts of the forts along the Great earthwork with other Roman or late antique military emplacements.²⁴

Ascribing the two earthworks to Roman and late Roman times has its own difficulties. The assumption that only Roman or Byzantine states had the technical and organizational ability to erect such structures, which is common among those who think the trenches are ancient, is flawed. Numerous post-classical societies built comparable dikes.²⁵ It is, in addition, illogical for the Romans to desire or need to build the same line of defence twice in a two-hundred year period, or even three times if the stone-capped dike is assigned late imperial dates. Instead, we might expect an effort to restore and improve what they had already built, as happened in northern England. Plausible as it is for one, at least, of the plain fosses to have been made by Roman legionaries (likely the Small earthwork), this remains archaeologically unproved, and no document supports the likelihood. The younger, more imposing dike, fortified and accompanied by a string of forts, is equally difficult to date in the absence of systematic archaeological excavations. Recent dating to around the year 900 is supported by some red-painted kaolin ware shards, but is contested by scholars who would locate construction a hundred years later.²⁶

In summary, the interwoven lines of the walled and simple dikes can be disentangled only with difficulty into any sort of comprehensive narrative. Part of the

²⁴ Napoli, *Recherches*, pp. 12, 19, and 55, argues for the Small earthwork's Roman construction, and the argument has the virtue of being relatively free of undemonstrated assumptions. She is not, naturally, the first to take this position. Bogdan-Cătăniciu, 'I valli di Traiano', used German World War I photos to reach the tentative conclusion that the forts along the earthworks look Romano-Byzantine. Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, pp. 150–69 and 181–89, argues forcibly for a massive Justinianic militarization of the Balkan provinces.

²⁵ Vulpe tended to assume that no one save the Romans had the necessary organization for building major dikes. See O. Crawford, 'The Lower Bessarabian Vallum', *Antiquity*, 28 (1954), 226; so did Krantzhalov, 'Sur la théorie erronée', p. 202, and 'Le système de défense', p. 10; Horedt, 'Zur Frage', p. 210. Barnea, 'Dobrogea între anii 681–1186', used the same reasoning to assign the Great earthworks to Byzantium.

²⁶ Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, pp. 30–31, thinks the Small earthwork is Bulgar, built before 680. He thinks Krum or Omurtag built the Great earthwork. See Curta, 'The Cave and the Dyke', p. 146, for the reasoned archaeological position. Bogdan-Cătăniciu, 'I valli di Traiano', p. 207, notes the need for systematic excavations before more chronological pronouncements, but leans toward a late Roman context for construction.

difficulty derives from the dogged pursuit of 'origins' for the structures, presumably because more honour accrues to the original builders than to later users or refurbishers of monumental dikes. But a subtler, diachronic approach to the history of these great embankments, in which their centuries-long life as usable monuments receives attention, is preferable.

Probably the first builders of earthworks in the Carasu valley were late antique and early Byzantine, but considerable efforts of refurbishment and maintenance took place in the early Middle Ages, and the walled dike, at least, may have originated then, though there are sound reasons for thinking the Great earthwork was a post-classical creation too. The *Vision of Isaiah* states clearly that the first khan to control the area dug a 'great ditch' from the Danube to the Black Sea, and associated the act with Bulgar possession of Roman territory. When the Bulgars crossed the Byzantine frontier on the Danube intense competition with other steppe peoples was under way, and Magyar and, later, Pecheneg hegemonies north of the Danube made Dobrudja a vulnerable zone. Hence some sort of protective embankment might have been useful to the Bulgars in Dobrudja as part of a defence in depth. Given how ticklish this region was for a state whose capital and heartlands lay just to the south of Dobrudja, while frightening enemies lived to the north of that region, Bulgar involvement with the fosses makes sense. Thus, alongside both textual and archaeological data, the strategic situation of the early medieval Bulgar khanate would suggest strong Bulgar involvement in the Dobrudjan dikes.²⁷ Yet conclusions about the dates of construction must be tentative. It is important that we retain some uncertainty about the moment when the Dobrudjan linear defences arose, even if we can be sure they were used by the Bulgars.

Uncertainty has, in fact, always haunted these structures, and even the *Vision* writer wrestled with doubt. For him, as for modern commentators, the titanic and deeply impressive linear fortifications that scarred eastern Bulgaria's land cried out for justification and a cultural collocation. Just as modern scholars have sought to connect the phenomenon of large-scale landscape alteration with other known facts, with history, so the heterodox author of the *Vision of Isaiah* attempted to make sense of what he knew about Asparuch and what he knew about the appearance of the physical environment by connecting the two. Asparuch was the best possible cause of the gash through the Dobrudja; he was heroic, powerful, a Bulgar to be proud of, and his

²⁷ Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, is convinced of this. For him, the Great earthwork arose in the early 800s (see his 'Zemlenata ukrepitelna sistema', p. 102) because archaeologists have found along it scattered shards, coins, and other items from the period up to the ninth century. Such data actually reveals the period when the earthwork was in use, not when it was created. Indeed, this structure was reused for different purposes during its long active life; see Condurachi, 'Neue Probleme und Ergebnisse', p. 173. Rashev, 'Les vallums de Dobrudža', pp. 53–55, also adduces parallels with Bulgar fortifications from c. 800 to date the Great earthwork. But he reasons teleologically about the 'natural' direction of development in military architecture in Bulgaria, with mounting levels of sophistication.

memory was associated with Dobrudja, the first corner of that somewhat mysterious 'Karvunian land' he and his followers encountered after crossing the Danube into Byzantine territory. In this sense, Asparuch was like 'the Romans' or 'the Byzantines' to modern writers. He was a powerful ruler whose modification of nature would have meaning. As such, he was a plausible author for observed, but mysterious, landscape change. Had he not been available for the early confectioner of Bulgarian history to use, Asparuch, like Trajan or Justinian, would have had to be invented.

Asparuch is sometimes linked to a few lesser earthen fortifications scattered throughout the conquered provinces, from Varna through the Dobrudja.²⁸ Of these, by far the most striking, as well as the most famous, is the circuit of earthworks around Pliska, the 'capital' of the Bulgar state between the seventh and the ninth centuries. They enclose a vast expanse of flat, rich alluvial soil in the plains of eastern Bulgaria (the place name may derive from *ploska*, a Slavonic word meaning 'flat'²⁹), and their length, about 20 km, can be likened to Aurelian's walls around Rome.³⁰ The *Vision of Isaiah* maintains that Asparuch built a city at Pliska, but within the earthen enclosure, relatively uninvestigated, scanty traces of settlement have emerged, leading to the supposition that nomad yurts occupied the space: indeed, traces of some have emerged.³¹ There is, however, a central palatial core

²⁸ Niculițel, close to the Danube Delta (Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, pp. 20–22 and 26–27, and 'L'Onglos – témoignages écrits', pp. 68–79), Varna on the Black Sea (Fiedler, 'Zur Datierung', p. 460), and the Lower Danube villages of Nova Cherna, Malāk, Preslavec, Kladenci, Dunavec, Popina, and Topola (Giuzelev, 'Die spätantike und frühmittelalterliche Stadt', p. 23), as well as some other sites (Giuzelev, 'Chan Asparuch', p. 43; Rashev, 'Les vallums de Dobrudža', p. 54, and 'Zemlenata ukrepitelna sistema', p. 99) have these structures. Scorpan, *Limes Scythiae*, p. 116, thinks urban moats were a late antique novelty.

²⁹ See Duichev's reviews of Krandzhalov's work in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 50 (1957), 546, and 51 (1958), 485. Veselin Beshevliev, 'Zur Geographie Nordost-Bulgariens in der Spätantike und im Mittelalter', *Linguistique balkanique*, 4 (1962), 73, favors an etymology from 'swamp' and stresses the pre-Bulgar Slavic occupation of the site. See also his *Die protobulgarische Periode*, p. 460, and Rasho Rashev, 'Nachaloto na Pliska i na bălgarskoto Landnahmezeit', in *Zwischen Byzanz und Abendland: Pliska, der östliche Balkanraum und Europa im Spiegel der Frühmittelalterarchäologie*, ed. by Joachim Henning (Frankfurt a.M., 1999), pp. 17–18.

³⁰ On the archaeology of Pliska, see Škorpil, 'Retrenchements', pp. 30–61; Rasho Rashev and Ianko Dimitrov, *Pliska: 100 godini arkeologicheski raskopki* (Shumen, 1999); Joachim Henning, 'Vom Herrschaftszentrum zur städtischen Großsiedlung mit agrarischer Komponente: Archäologische Nachweise der Landwirtschaft aus dem frühmittelalterlichen Pliska', *Pliska-Preslav*, 8 (2000), 74–86. Krandzhalov, 'Le système de défense', pp. 27–32, gives a scathing account of the Pliskan digs.

³¹ Rasho Rashev, 'Pliska – the First Capital of Bulgaria', in *Ancient Bulgaria*, ed. by Poulter, p. 259. Ibn Fadlan, *Risalat*, translated by M. Canard (Beirut, 1981), p. 44, details Volga Bulgar yurts around 922. Barnea, 'Dobrogea între anii 681–1186', p. 29, discounts the *Vision* as evidence. For the early settlement inside the enclosure, see Radoslav Vasilev, 'Za planirov-

within massive stone walls of an archaic, non-Byzantine type, which may replicate Hellenistic fortifications such as those on the Black Sea coast, near Nesebăr.³² The present walls were erected in the ninth century, presumably part of the overhaul Pliska required after the Byzantine sack of 811, a gleaming statement of Bulgaria's rulers' confidence in their irrevocability in a place of special importance to them.³³ The materials used for the outer circuit were quite different, though not for that any less meaningful. In the first place they were very local, indeed organic, part of the place itself. Second, the earthwork was on a far grander scale than the palace walls. For the rampart is still today up to 7 m high, and the rounded ditch is between 4 and 6 m deep. Even awash in springtime grasses growing knee high, and in uncertain early morning light, this earthwork is starkly visible across the plain and must have

kata na niakhoi rannosrednovekovni selishta vāv vānshniia grad na Pliska', in *Prinosi kām bālgarskata arkheologiiā*, ed. by Dimitār Ovcharov, vol. II (Sofia, 1993), pp. 35–39. On Pliskan urbanism, see Pavlina Petrova, 'Kām vāprosa za istoriko-arkheologicheskata topografiia na vānshniia grad na Pliska po dannī na aerometoda', *Pliska-Preslav*, 5 (1992), 64–76; Pavel Georgiev, 'Selishtata struktura na Aboba-Pliska', *Arkheologiiā*, 41 (2000), 16–30.

³² The style of these walls manifests Omurtag's capacity to make ideological points through building. By avoiding Byzantine-style bricks (easily manufactured or spoliated locally), he signalled independence and perhaps claimed connection to a pre-Byzantine history of the area (or, as Vasil Giuzelev, *Medieval Bulgaria, Byzantine Empire, Black Sea, Venice, Genoa* (Villach, 1988), p. 53, thinks, to the past of another area the Bulgars traversed, the Caucasus). See Runciman, *A History*, pp. 60–61; Ivan Venedikov and others, 'Disposition, fouilles et remparts de Nessèbre du côté occidental', in *Nessèbre*, ed. by T. Ivanov, vol. I (Sofia, 1969), pp. 29–36; N. Oikonomides, 'Mesembria in the 9th Century – Epigraphical Evidence', in *Essays in the Area of Slavic Languages, Linguistic, and Byzantology: A Festschrift in Honor of Antonín Dostál on the Occasion of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by Thomas G. Winner (Irvine, 1985), pp. 271–73. Sassanian models have also been posited for the walls: Dimitār Krandzhalov, 'L'influence sassanide dans l'art bulgare ancien au 9ème siècle', in *Actes du VII^e Congrès international des sciences préhistoriques et protohistoriques; Prague, 21–27 août 1966*, ed. by Jan Filip, vol. II (Prague, 1971), pp. 1056–58. The use of spolia at Pliska served some of these same purposes, though unlike the giant stones, spolia were locally available. Jonathan Shepard, 'Byzantine Relations with the Outside World in the Ninth Century: An Introduction', in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, ed. Leslie Brubaker (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 172–73, discusses the Lower Don castle the Byzantines built c. 840, known as Sarkel and part of a strategy of alliance with Bulgaria's northern neighbours. Its excellent brickwork shows materials made ideological statements in this period and context.

³³ This is the date offered on the basis of pottery shards and other material finds by 1970s excavators: Ivan Zakhariev, 'Iuzhnata krepostna stena na Pliska i nekropolāt, otkrit do neia (razkopki prez 1971–1974 g.)', *Pliska-Preslav*, 1 (1979), 108–38; Radoslav Vasilev, 'Iztochnata krepostna stena v Pliska (Razkopki prez 1972–1974 g.)', *Pliska-Preslav*, 1 (1979), 98–107; Liudmila Doncheva-Petkova, 'Zapadnata krepostna stena v Pliska (Prouchvaniia na iuzhniia sektor prez 1973 i 1974 g.)', *Pliska-Preslav*, 1 (1979), 81–97.

been more so when it was built, before the mechanized agriculture, heavy plows, and intensified rural settlement of the last decades.³⁴

Dating Pliska's ditch and rampart is difficult. The literary record on this site is limited, and like all earthen monuments, the ditch offers few archaeological pegs for dating, though most of those who have essayed a date reject Krandzhalov's Roman attribution (with the fosse as a legionary *vallum*).³⁵ The main problem with assigning a 20-km circuit to the Roman period is the size of this structure. A military camp on this scale, with a surrounding ditch of this size, is unattested in the Roman history of this area. Though some Roman camps, particularly in Rhaetia, had ditches around them, they occupied a fraction of the space Pliska does. Since several other Roman

³⁴ Géza Fehér, *A bolgár-török műveltség emlékei és magyar östörténeti vonatkozásai: Les monuments de la culture protobulgare et leur relations hongroises* (Budapest, 1931), p. 2, thought the embankment invisible from a distance because of vegetation. Some Byzantine writers portrayed the plain north of the Stara Planina range as uninhabited wilderness. See, for example, John Scylitzes, *Synopsis historiarum*, ed. by J. Thurn (Berlin, 1973), p. 299; Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 152. This was a stereotype for barbarism; see Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, pp. 1–5. Archaeological finds of early medieval and late antique farming equipment indicate that though late Roman cities suffered depopulation, this countryside was not deserted: Joachim Henning, *Südosteuropa zwischen Antike und Mittelalter: Archäologische Beiträge zur Landwirtschaft des I. Jahrtausends u.Z.* (Berlin, 1987), pp. 35–40 and 51–53; Klavs Randsborg, *The First Millenium A.D. in Europe and the Mediterranean* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 61–64.

³⁵ Krandzhalov persistently rejected early medieval dates for the finds at the site of Aboba. He thought the only reason for identifying the modern village of Aboba with Pliska (the name Byzantine authors gave to the Bulgar capital) was national pride. Krandzhalov, 'Sur la théorie erronée', pp. 196–98, and 'Is the Fortress at Aboba Identical with Pliska, the Oldest Capital of Bulgaria?', *Slavia Antiqua*, 13 (1966), 444–45, accused the excavators at Pliska of falsifying their data and hiding evidence. He succeeded in injecting among Bulgarian scholars a grain of self-consciousness about 'bourgeois and nationalist tendencies' (see Stanchev, 'Pliska und Preslav: ihre archäologische Denkmäler und deren Erforschung', in *Antike und Mittelalter in Bulgarien*, ed. by V. Beshevliev and J. Irmscher (Berlin, 1960), p. 261, who however considered the defect pertinent only to the 1920s and 1930s). He also succeeded in fostering scepticism about Pliska's supposed Bulgar authorship in Yugoslav scholarship. See, for example, Đurđe Stričević, 'L'église ronde de Preslav et le problème des traditions paléobyzantines dans l'architecture balcanique du Moyen Age', in *Actes du XII^e Congrès international d'études byzantines: Ochride, 10–16 septembre 1961*, vol. I (Belgrade, 1964), pp. 212–23, for whom the quality of Pliska's architecture makes it late antique, not Bulgar. Following a suggestion by Jireček, towards the end of his career, Krandzhalov thought that Pliska was a Roman camp: see Krandzhalov, 'Le système de défense', pp. 35–36. He was right that modern patriotism had a lot to do with the excavation of this site. Its earthworks, for example, were neglected before 1974, when impending celebrations of the 1300th jubilee of the Bulgarian state ignited new research into the state's 'origins'. See Rasho Rashev, 'Zemlenoto ukreplenie na Pliska', *Pliska-Preslav*, 4 (1985), 7.

military settlements are known in this region, it is implausible that the largest in the Balkans would have gone unnoticed by writers and administrators. In fact, the settlement at Pliska resembles steppe nomad settlements more.³⁶ As the Roman and late antique artefacts at Pliska all seem to be *spolia*, and since shards and other signs of Bulgar occupation begin with the mid-eighth-century dates, to assign the ditch to the early Bulgar period is feasible. But whether Asparuch himself used this furrow in his primitive Pliska, or whether it was dug later in the eighth century, when the Isaurian emperors menaced the khans, or even under Omurtag, when the city was refurbished and the splendid palace arose, cannot be settled.³⁷

The Dikes as Military Encampments

Archaeologically undated, and perhaps undatable, the Bulgarian earthworks have become embroiled in a ping-pong match of often nationalistic scholarly attempts to advance an acceptable chronological framework for them.³⁸ That much remains uncertain is an important realization, as important for the chronologies as for scholars' interpretations of the earthworks and the uses they have imagined for them. For unlike the *Vision* writer, those who have noted the existence of the dikes and offered a contested date for their construction have also offered some explanation of why they are there.

By far the most popular learned interpretation of the embankments has been the military one: the dikes were defensive, military installations.³⁹ Initially this may seem a reasonable, even an obvious proposition. Trenches and moats have long served soldiers' purposes, giving defenders cover and hampering the advance of their enemies. A Roman military writer like Hyginus or a Byzantine panegyrist like

³⁶ Giuzelev, *Medieval Bulgaria*, pp. 53–59, discusses earthworks around camps in the steppes.

³⁷ Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, pp. 97–101, and 'Zemlenoto ukreplenie na Pliska', p. 13, argues for Asparuchian dates, but the earthwork, which was completed in a few points by stone facing, was more probably dug in the mid-700s, when the earliest datable occupation of the site inside the ditch is attested.

³⁸ See the contrasting views on Dobrudjan history in surveys: Adrian Rădulescu and Ion Bitoleanu, *A Concise History of Dobrudja* (Bucharest, 1984), pp. 121–22; *Kratka istoriia na Dobrudzha*, ed. by Velko Tonev and Iordan Zarchev (Varna, 1986), pp. 412–13.

³⁹ This belief, assumed or enunciated, is in Tocilescu, *Fouilles*, pp. 155–56; Schuchhardt, 'Die sogenannten Trajanswälle', pp. 6 and 65; Vulpe, *Ancient History*, pp. 95, 104, and 121; H. von Petrikovits, 'Über die Herkunft der Annäherungshindernisse an den römischen Militärgrenzen', in *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms*, p. 215; Barnea and Vulpe, *Romanii la Dunărea de Jos*, pp. 387–88; Vulpe, 'Les "valla" de la Valachie', p. 267; Giuzelev, 'Chan Asparuch', p. 38; Fiedler, 'Zur Datierung', pp. 459–61; Napoli, *Recherches*, pp. 2 and 18–19; Curta, 'The Cave and the Dyke', p. 148.

Procopius had a thorough grasp of the tactical advantages moats procured.⁴⁰ But the monumental dikes considered here do not appear to satisfy the military needs of late antique and early medieval Bulgaria, insofar as we can reconstruct these needs.

Indeed, the military utility of Dobrudja's trenches, and even of the wall, is almost as dubious as their dating. As fighting platforms, their tactical faults were so obvious that they baffled Schuchhardt, the German archaeologist who wrote some of the earliest and most penetrating studies of these structures, a result of his painstaking surveys.⁴¹ An officer during the First World War, Schuchhardt was a fine connoisseur of trenches and thought hard about how they could, and could not, be used in pre-modern combat. His judgement was that the placement of the dikes in the Carasu valley was militarily unreasonable, for their courses exposed them to hostile scrutiny and even attack from commanding positions above them; in addition, in places their location precluded retreat before victorious invaders except into treacherous, watery terrain. Schuchhardt also noted how none of the linear 'defences' extended along the entire distance between river and sea, while several of the 'gaps' were not covered by any natural barriers, so that attackers might pass through the dikes unopposed and outflank any hapless defenders. On the eastern end of all three fosses the fortifications did not reach the sea and also, strangely, excluded Tomis (Constanța) from their 'protection'. This is baffling whether Romans made the dikes, and left their main city exposed, or Bulgars built them, and overlooked the potential for naval landings in Tomis's harbour.⁴² And, though Schuchhardt did not mention it, the profile of the earthworks, lacking a ledge for fighters to fight from (and, apparently, lacking any palisades too, which might reflect Dobrudja's deforestation, then still 'in progress'), also indicates that this was not their primary purpose. Further confirmation of this position comes from the fact that no fighting was recorded along the Dobrudjan earthworks during Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. As all manner of

⁴⁰ Pseudo-Hyginus, *On Camp Fortifications*, ed. by Maurice Lenoir (Paris, 1979), p. 20; Procopius, *Buildings* 3.5.9, ed. by J. Haury and trans. by H. B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA, 1940).

⁴¹ See Napoli, *Recherches*, p. 352, on how Schuchhardt's wartime experience coloured his understanding. Schuchhardt, 'Die Anastasiusmauer', pp. 118–19, expressed muted misgivings that World War I later amplified: Schuchhardt, 'Die sogenannten Trajanswälle', p. 28. He thought economic considerations outweighed the military engineers' reasons in these structures. Even Rashev, 'Les vallums de Dobrudža', p. 53, in extolling the defensibility of the Great earthwork cannot explain its positioning on the north flank of several hills. Nicolae Gudea, 'Die Verteidigung der Provinz Dacia Porolissensis zwischen Mauersperre und Verteidigung in der Tiefe', in *Roman Frontier Studies 1995: Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies*, ed. by W. Groenmann-van Waateringe and others (Oxford, 1997), pp. 13–17, considers Roman use of natural features for defence.

⁴² Bogdan-Cătăniciu, 'I valli di Traiano', p. 207, cannot explain the exclusion of Tomis. Rashev, 'Les vallums de Dobrudža', p. 50, who thinks the Bulgars controlled all the region and hermetically sealed off the coast to the Byzantine navy, fails to justify the dikes' petering out near Tomis.

military expeditions are known to have traversed the area, a veritable funnel and obligatory passage from the southern steppeland into Thrace and the Mediterranean, in which numerous sites *were* fought over, this silence is all the more important. Roman, Byzantine, Bulgar, and other barbarian troops chose other places to do their fighting.⁴³ In 967, when the Rus occupied the region with apparent ease, all three linear barriers certainly were extant and, almost equally certainly, useless.⁴⁴

Ineffective as fighting platforms, the dikes along the Carasu valley are surpassed by simpler constructions (a few intelligently placed towers) as lookout posts from which to catch sight of enemies before summoning reinforcements from the rear-guard.⁴⁵ Moreover, if the builders of the earthworks had hoped to slow down advancing enemies through 'approach-hindrances' while defenders concentrated for a counterattack, they surely would not have left 13-km openings in the middle of their structure (from Gura Ghermelii to Pietrele), close to where major Roman military highways leading north-south passed. For if the wall is almost continuous, a score of other smaller gaps turn the simple dikes into a dotted line on modern maps.⁴⁶ In addition, the ditches are neither deep nor steep enough to cause more than a few minutes' delay to horses and pedestrians, though admittedly the stone wall posed greater problems. Certainly all three linear barriers created difficulties for wheeled traffic, but even for carts the earthworks are not insurmountable.⁴⁷ It is well to keep in mind that any land forces that advanced upon the Dobrudjan ditches from the north had already performed the logistical feat of crossing the Danube, and were clearly capable of getting around major hindrances.⁴⁸

⁴³ Vulpe, *Ancient History*, pp. 127–31, gives a cataclysmic picture of military activity in the Dobrudja from Late Antiquity, based on archaeological and literary data.

⁴⁴ Curta, 'The Cave and the Dyke', p. 149. Rashev, 'Les vallums de Dobrudža', p. 53, and Bogdan-Cătăniciu, 'I valli di Traiano', p. 203, think that the steep cliffs in sections of the 13-km gap encouraged the builders' negligence.

⁴⁵ On the dikes as observation decks, see Forni and others, 'Limes', pp. 1280–81. Towers would have been cheaper and easier to build, and if taller than the dikes also more effective.

⁴⁶ Vulpe, *Ancient History*, pp. 14–15; Gajewska, *Topographie*, pp. 66–80; Aricescu, *The Army*, pp. 80 and 103; Curta, 'The Cave and the Dyke', p. 145. Roman ditches are sometimes interpreted as 'Annäherungshindernisse'; see Petrikovits, 'Über die Herkunft', p. 215, and Vulpe, 'Les "valla" de la Valachie', pp. 269–71.

⁴⁷ J. G. Crow, 'The Function of Hadrian's Wall and the Comparative Evidence of Late Roman Long Walls', in *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms III. 13. internationaler Limeskongress Aalen 1983. Vorträge* (Stuttgart, 1983), p. 728, exaggerates the 'considerable deterrent' earthworks created by posing logistical problems for invaders living off the land. On the contrary, earthworks might have been more problematic for invaders who maintained supply lines across them.

⁴⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 31.3.8, ed. by Wolfgang Seyfarth (Berlin, 1968–71), reveals how efficacious a barrier the Danube was considered to be in the fourth century. See Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, pp. 153–55, on the Danube frontier in the 500s.

A final consideration against the argument that the Dobrudjan earthworks were useful military structures is their size. Even if the dikes had stretched uninterrupted along the 70 km separating the Danube and the Black Sea, before modern times no army in the area was large enough to patrol and guard the dikes properly. Certainly, the troops that could be housed in the forts behind the Great earthwork were insufficient for that task.⁴⁹ This is a consideration people who lived during the post-classical period understood. In his hostile evaluation of the building program of the Emperor Anastasius, one of Justinian's immediate predecessors, Procopius wrote that the Long Wall Anastasius built in southern Thrace to protect Constantinople was worthless.⁵⁰ In part, Procopius was driven by his desire to contrast the idle efforts of Justinian's forebears with the glorious and invincible buildings Justinian erected. But in part Procopius was also advancing a pragmatic criticism of massive linear defences (the Long Wall, cutting Thrace from Constantinople's hinterland, is 45 km long). For Procopius, the Long Wall was flawed because the Empire did not have enough soldiers to man it effectively, and, inevitably, it failed to halt incursions against the capital (in 540, 550, 558, 619, 626, 705, 717, 812, 813, 820, 921, 922, 924⁵¹). Revealingly, the *Chronicon Paschale* suggests that Anastasius too knew that the Long Wall's goal was not military at all, but political. After the erection of the barrier, Anastasius is represented winning control of the urban population that had, until then, resisted his rule. Perhaps, then, the writers of the *Chronicon* were hinting that giant military emplacements of the sort Anastasius favoured were really public relations exercises, not military at all.⁵²

Given their tactical limitations, it is not surprising that the only evidence of actual use of the dikes in wars relates to modern times, to nineteenth-century hostilities between Russian and Ottoman troops.⁵³ Prior to the dissemination of long-range

⁴⁹ On manning the dikes, see Napoli, *Recherches*, p. 53.

⁵⁰ Procopius, *Buildings* 4.9.6, ed. by Haury, trans. by Dewing.

⁵¹ F. Dirimtekin, 'Le mura di Anastasio I', *Palladio*, 5 (1955), 87; Rashev, 'Les vallums de Dobrudža', p. 54. Raiders instead found Constantinople's triple walls a real deterrent: these could be, and were, defended by large numbers of people, for they were short and enclosed a concentrated population.

⁵² *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. by Ludwig Dindorf (Bonn, 1832), p. 610. The Long Wall had a distinguished second life as the Chatalya line in late Ottoman times. See J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian (A.D. 395 to A.D. 565)*, vol. I (London, 1923), pp. 435–36. It is still militarized, and access to its ruins is restricted. On this wall, see Michael Whitby, 'The Long Walls of Constantinople', *Byzantion*, 55 (1985), 560–83; J. G. Crow, 'The Long Walls of Thrace', in *Constantinople and its Hinterland: Papers from the Twenty-Seventh Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Oxford, April 1993*, ed. by Cyril Mango and Gilbert Dagron (Aldershot, 1995), pp. 110–19.

⁵³ Vulpe, *Ancient History*, p. 126; Petrikovits, 'Über die Herkunft', p. 215; Škorpil, 'Constructions', pp. 28–29. Tocilescu, *Fouilles*, p. 169, comments on Russian artillery emplacements along the Great earthwork during the Crimean war.

artillery and big conscript armies, the Dobrudjan dikes' tactical weaknesses disqualified them as useful military barriers. Neither Roman nor Byzantine engineers, nor other competent fighters, can have built them for fighting.⁵⁴

Though some have argued that Pliska was a lightly fortified winter camp for pastoral Bulgars, a place in which to pass the months during which the Balkan highlands were under heavy snow and their tender pastures were utterly frozen, most who have considered this site have seen its earthen circuit as militarily conceived.⁵⁵ Thus we may legitimately wonder why so unabashed a modification of the lowland landscape as the 20-km circuit represents was militarily necessary at Pliska. Certainly a flat, low-lying royal residence might have required special protection.⁵⁶ Yet Pliska's embankment did not serve soldiers' needs. This was both because the rampart was unprotected, without palisades, and because it did not have a ledge or fighting platform on the inside from which the Bulgars could fight efficiently, whereas it did have a wide berm which would facilitate the task of any who attempted to cross the ditch and rampart. Again the size of Bulgar fighting forces, large by early medieval standards, does not seem equal to the task of manning a 20-

⁵⁴ The rapid substitution of some forts along the Great earthwork suggests that its builders could change their minds about its utilization in light of perceived inadequacies. Napoli, *Recherches*, p. 53, records the replacement of larger earthen forts with small ones very soon after the first were finished (there are scanty signs that either large or small forts were used for barracks or in combat: Vulpe, *Ancient History*, p. 126), and considers this a sign of troop reductions, and hence a sign that the earthwork was built during peace.

⁵⁵ For Jonathan Shepard, 'Slavs and Bulgars', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. by Timothy Reuter, vol. II (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 228–48, Pliska's earthwork was designed early, under Asparuch, while Bulgar nomadism was still vigorous, to pen in Bulgar herds during the dangerous part of the year, when life as an isolated kin group gave way to integration into a wider community. See Peter B. Golden, 'Imperial Ideology and the Sources of Political Unity among the pre-Cinggisid Nomads of Western Eurasia', *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 2 (1982), 45–51, on how pastoralism's seasonal needs matched those of state-forming chieftains, and p. 58 on the criteria by which those afforded protection were chosen. See also Halperin, 'Bulgars and Slavs', pp. 193–94 and 199. But if the Bulgars required lowland winter pasture and a space for togetherness, moving so many tons of soil was an odd way to obtain either. A wooden fence might better detain wayward animals and fend off (four-footed or other) predators.

⁵⁶ As Shepard, 'Slavs and Bulgars', p. 229, thinks. J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 67, suggests the site was chosen because it was located strategically on the Danube-Constantinople route, able to control the Dobrudja. Krăstiu Miiatev, *Die mittelalterliche Baukunst in Bulgarien* (Sofia, 1974), p. 35, considers Pliska a military camp, not a royal residence. See also Vasil Giuzelev, 'Hauptstädte, Residenzen und Hofkultur im mittelalterlichen Bulgarien, 7.–14. Jh. (Vom Nomadencampus bis zum Zarenhof)', *Etudes Balkaniques*, 27 (1991), 82–105, and Rosica Panova, 'Some Reflexions on the Khan's Residences in Early Bulgarian Medieval History', *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 24 (1996), 105–08.

km perimeter, and the numbers required to keep it clear of debris, waste, and alluvium washed into the pit by rain, vital for the ditch's functionality as a barrier, were daunting too.⁵⁷ The real defences of the site were the forts and fortifications distributed around Pliska on the main access routes (for example on passes through the Balkans, such as Rish). Their existence suggests that withstanding sieges within Pliska was not the intention of the settlement's occupants.⁵⁸

Patriarch Nicephorus relates in his *History* that in the unstable later eighth century, when the Bulgars felt threatened they fortified the passes through the Balkans, this being the most sensible tactic through which to confront Constantine V's belligerence.⁵⁹ In fact, the Byzantine armies that periodically threatened Pliska, like those of Emperor Nicephorus in 811, encountered Bulgar resistance at various points removed from the town; if they overcame this, they entered Pliska itself with little trouble. The eyewitness account of the ill-fated Byzantine expedition of 811 is explicit about this. In order to burn the khan's old (wooden) residence and drink the wines stashed in its cellars, the Byzantines had to fight through Thrace and on the slopes of the Stara Planina range. But at Pliska itself, neither at the earthen outer perimeter nor at the palisade around the sublime khan's residence did Bulgar troops put up a fight

⁵⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 29.6.11, ed. by Seyfarth, in a fascinating aside, tells of a praetorian prefect at Sirmium who had to prepare the town for an unexpected attack, and therefore had to clear out the 'choked up moats' ('obrutas fossas'). Ditches require maintenance for efficacy, and 20-km ditches require lots of it. Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria*, p. 114, calculates Krum's army at its height as having 30,000 troops on campaign. Even if this is accurate (which I doubt), supplying such numbers in a fixed place for some time challenged early medieval logistics and was not something that one would plan on. According to other sources, 12,000 soldiers were left to defend the khan's residence, though the khan himself, significantly, fled. The number is certainly exaggerated. See Ivan Duichev, 'La chronique byzantine de l'an 811', *Travaux et mémoires du Centre de recherches d'histoire et civilisation byzantines*, 1 (1965), 205–54 (reprinted in his *Medioevo bizantino-slavo*, vol. II (Rome, 1968), esp. p. 432).

⁵⁸ On Pliska's system of defence, see Bury, *History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, pp. 338–39; Duichev, 'La chronique byzantine', p. 471; Petăr Koledarov, 'Administrative Structure and Frontier Set Up of the First Bulgarian Kingdom', *Etudes Balkaniques*, 14 (1978), 134; Rashev, 'Zemlenata ukrepitelna sistema', p. 101; Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, p. 103; Rashev, 'Pliska – the First Capital', p. 261; Warren T. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842* (Stanford, 1988), p. 173; Soustal, *Thrakien*, pp. 82–83. Pliska was not a successful stronghold: it was plundered in 809 (Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria*, p. 49; Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 157; Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State-formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East* (Wiesbaden, 1992), p. 250) and fell swiftly to the Byzantines in the tenth century (Diaconu, 'Zur Frage der Datierung', pp. 324–34). Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, p. 174, even ascribes the ninth-century preference for stone fortifications to the obvious failure of the earthwork.

⁵⁹ *Historia Syntomos*, ed. by Carl de Boor (Leipzig, 1880), p. 71.

worth retelling. Khan Krum, a skilled soldier, himself abandoned the site when news of the Byzantine advance reached him.⁶⁰ After relating the easy storming of the Bulgar citadel, the same witness describes the highly efficacious fortifications which the Bulgars *did* employ in combat. These were made of wood shafts so tall that to climb them was difficult, and they reserved unpleasant surprises to any who, peradventure, got to the top and faced the need to climb down on the other side. The *Chronicle* records that the Byzantines who scaled the palisade, erected in a mountain cul de sac to cut off the Byzantine retreat from Pliska, fell into a ditch dug on the opposite side and shattered their bones. Others, who tried to burn down an opening, floundered in the same ditch, filled with burning tree trunks, and perished miserably. The wooden wall, the ditch, and the nearby unfordable watercourse were combined to devastating effect by the Bulgar army after Pliska's circular bank and ditch had offered no military advantages.⁶¹

Thus, a close reading of the account provided by the Byzantine survivor of the expedition of 811 suggests that Pliska's fortifications were not primarily military in purpose and were easily overcome by enemies. The *Chronicle* also reveals that the

⁶⁰ The *Chronicle of 811* was written a few generations after the events to commemorate the encounter's Byzantine 'martyrs', but contains eyewitness material. According to it, the Bulgars were effortlessly slaughtered at Pliska prior to the looting of the khan's residence. Duichev, 'La chronique byzantine', pp. 446 and 452, thinks such Bulgar docility incredible. Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, pp. 243–44, sees in it a clever trap, leading to the debacle in the Verigava pass (though Cyril Mango and Roger Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813* (Oxford, 1997), p. 676 with no. 17, think that it was not Pliska that was sacked; traces of an early ninth-century conflagration have been found at Pliska). On the 811 attack, see Runciman, *A History*, pp. 53–56; Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria*, pp. 49–50, who makes the odd remark that in 809 the Bulgars were not yet 'interested in holding fortified positions'; Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 158, who minimizes the defensibility of Pliska.

⁶¹ Duichev, 'La chronique byzantine', p. 471, and others believe that the palisade was not erected in the short time when Nicephorus's army was encamped in the Balkan mountains en route to Serdica, but was there all along, part of the 'outer circuit' of Pliska's defences, designed to choke off access to the plain from the south. This would explain why the ditch was on the 'outside' of the palisade. Yet it is obvious that the Bulgars did not intend to use this fence as a fighting platform (they too would have had trouble mounting to their positions on the palisade), and it worked wonderfully with the ditch 'outside'. Perhaps this structure was no fluke or improvisation, but a purposeful trap, like that on the *Fossatum Africae* (p. 68 above). Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, pp. 244–47, thinks Krum built the wall for the occasion. Theophanes (*Chronographia*, ed. by de Boor, p. 490, trans. by Mango and Scott, p. 673) stresses that Bulgar structures at Pliska and in the environs were also wooden, and that Krum raised the wooden wall to trap Nicephorus. Such traps were a Balkan tradition: Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 31.8.1, ed. by Seyfarth, says the Romans trapped the Goths in the Balkan mountain passes with fortified ditches. Petrova, 'Kăm vāprosa za istoriko-arkheologicheskata topografiiā', pp. 66–67, discusses Pliskan palisades.

Bulgars knew how to build and use defensive barriers and suggests that in the years around 800 they tended to use wood when building them. All of this leads to the conclusion that the earthwork around Pliska, whose rampart had no palisade and whose ditch was not floodable, had purposes other than martial ones.⁶²

The Dikes as Frontiers

Another line of interpretation of the long dikes' purpose has been that, where they traverse a territory to design a linear division, they mark a border (Pliska is excluded, because of the circular nature of its ditch). This hypothesis is unconvincing for several reasons. To begin, there is the fact that most of the great trenches do not lie on any known border. For instance, the Roman and Byzantine imperial border never lay halfway up the Dobrudja. Even after the debacle in Dacia and that province's abandonment under Aurelian in the third century, the Danube, not the Carasu, became *finis imperii*.⁶³ The Byzantines maintained the same border until 681 and, long after the Bulgar transgression rolled the real imperial boundary south to the Stara Planina Mountains, they kept the Danube as a theoretical limit to the *oikumene* over which the emperor from God held sway.⁶⁴ Nor are there any signs that the mid-Dobrudjan valley was a Bulgar border. Despite the debate over the Byzantine chronicler Theophanes' mysterious 'Onglos', said to be the first place of Bulgar settlement in the Danube area, surrounded by all manner of impassable defences, there is little doubt that the 'Onglos' was not the entire north Dobrudja. As we have seen, the 'Onglos' was probably a small site north of the Danube, and was probably not surrounded by enormous artificial barriers. Hence the 'Onglos' does not lurk behind any Bulgar need for a boundary in the Dobrudja before 681.⁶⁵ After the Bulgars settled inside

⁶² Stanchev, 'Pliska und Preslav', p. 222, points out that the nature of the soil makes the ditch dry.

⁶³ Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, p. 31, is rightly hesitant in suggesting that the Carasu in ancient times was held to be the Danube (and hence the border). See Scorpan, *Limes Scythiae*, pp. 2–3, on the *limes* in Scythia.

⁶⁴ Velizar Velkov, 'Der römische Limes in Bulgarien während der Spätantike', *Studii clasice*, 3 (1961), 241–44; Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova, 'L'idée impériale à Byzance et la tradition étatique bulgare', *Byzantina*, 3 (1971), 289–91; Evangelos Chrysos, 'Zur Gründung des ersten bulgarischen Staates', *Cyrillomethodianum*, 2 (1972–73), 7–13, and 'Die Nordgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches im 6. bis 8. Jahrhundert', in *Die Völker Südosteuropas im 6. bis 8. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Bernhard Hänsel (Berlin, 1987), pp. 27–40, esp. p. 32; Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, pp. 5–6.

⁶⁵ Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, pp. 29–32, seeks to explain the event of 680/1 as part of a longer Bulgar occupation of the area, including north Dobrudja. This allows him to posit the Small earthwork as a Bulgar border before 680. Neither the archaeological nor the textual evidence for this position is convincing. Rashev also fails to explain why the Bulgars indulged in this anomalous form of border-delimitation in the early 600s.

the Byzantine Empire, the plain of Shumen formed the khans' heartland, and the Dobrudja was hardly a periphery, so again, no Bulgar boundary needed to traverse it in the eighth and ninth centuries.⁶⁶ As there are at least four hillforts north of the dikes dating to the tenth century, it seems that the Bulgars exercised authority both south and north of the linear embankments.⁶⁷

During the later 900s, Byzantium was able to realize some of its theoretical claims to this land, using the river and naval superiority as a starting point for expansion. Briefly, a Byzantine-Bulgar border may have run along the Carasu valley. That might be the context for the construction of the masonry wall, if indeed it is a mid-tenth-century structure, as a militarized border marker, one which is almost uninterrupted, unlike the earthen ditches. Since it roughly duplicates the older ditch-and-rampart structures, one could also imagine the two simple earthworks as monumental boundaries demarcating Bulgar territory in a sensitive time. But if the dikes are taken to be tenth-century Bulgar boundaries, then the lightly populated Dobrudja was the largest construction site of the early Middle Ages for a few febrile decades in the tenth century. This idea lacks archaeological support and raises the question of why, if these *were* boundaries, the indefatigable builders kept replacing their very laborious border indicator with new ones just a few metres removed from the old ones. Finally, if the earthworks were border indicators they were puzzlingly monumental, militarily awkward ones.

In sum, the notion that the Dobrudjan trenches signalled boundaries between rival polities is not a satisfactory solution to the question of why the earthworks were made. The collocation of these earthen 'boundaries' does not match what we know of the early medieval political and social history of the lower Danube region. It also imposes modern strictures on the fluid territoriality of the early medieval Balkans. In other words, to take the earthworks as border demarcations is to mistake early medieval frontier zones for modern linear borders.⁶⁸ For people living in the early

⁶⁶ Constantin Jireček, *Geschichte der Bulgaren* (Prague, 1876), p. 131; Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (New York, 1971), p. 64; Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, p. 32. Diaconu is isolated in his belief that the Danube Delta remained Byzantine throughout the post-classical period (thus making the mid-Dobrudja a borderland); see Petre Diaconu, 'La Dobroudja et le Byzance à l'époque de la genèse du peuple roumain (VII–X^e s.)', *Pontica*, 14 (1981), 217–20, and 'Sur l'histoire de la Dobroudja au Moyen Âge', *Dacia*, 32 (1988), 175–93.

⁶⁷ Curta, 'The Cave and the Dyke', p. 147, reports four tenth-century Bulgar forts north of the dikes, suggesting the khans exercised authority on both sides of the embankments and did not use them as a delimitation of their authority. Koledarov, 'Administrative Structure', p. 83, and *Politicheska geografia*, p. 136, dissociates Bulgar state borders and linear defences, without explaining satisfactorily why the 'defences' were located where he thinks they were.

⁶⁸ J. Prescott, *Political Frontiers and Boundaries* (London, 1987), pp. 1–13. Koledarov, 'Administrative Structure' and *Politicheska geografia*, nicely describes the open-edged, 'fuzzy' quality of Bulgar frontier zones.

Middle Ages, like Byzantine writers, knew their polities had edges or extremities, not borders.⁶⁹ This conceptualization may be glimpsed in the sole surviving Bulgar border-description, carved into the Suleyman Köy pillar.⁷⁰ In the inscription, the Bulgar-Byzantine border of the early 800s was a list of individual significant localities that borderlanders might string together while using them. Even the natural features mentioned by the pillar's carvers, the Stara Planina Mountains and the Maritsa River, are zones, not crisp ribbons. Each of the places the text mentioned was taken to represent an area to which the site which was mentioned conferred solidity and comprehensibility, but which lacked firm boundaries.

If in the early 800s Bulgar rulers used single points, rather than linear fosses, to mark the land, it is unsurprising that in early medieval Bulgaria ditches are seldom attested as boundary-markers or landscape signals. Instead, columns were the preferred medium to signal territoriality, as attests a surviving border pillar from about 900 now in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul.⁷¹ This pillar, today 1.20 m tall but once taller, actually calls itself a marker (*oros*) in the text on its side, in a curious mixture of literate and illiterate semiotics (the meaning of the pillar would have been known to locals, even those incapable of reading Greek, so the label is an affectation of a ruler for whom writing in Greek had special meaning).⁷² Allied with a series of similar markers, it would create an ideal curtain through which people passed in crossing the border, thus conforming to van Gennep's expectations for symbolic objects to be located along borders.⁷³ With a string of pillars the khans formed an

⁶⁹ Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, pp. 5–6; Walter E. Kaegi, 'The Frontier: Barrier or Bridge?', in *The 17th International Byzantine Congress: Major Papers. Dumbarton Oaks/Georgetown University, Washington D.C., August 3–8, 1986* (New Rochelle, 1986), p. 286.

⁷⁰ Veselin Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarischen Inschriften* (Berlin, 1963), p. 190 no. 41. Sensible commentary is in Peter Soustal, 'Bemerkungen zur byzantinisch-bulgarischen Grenze im 9. Jahrhundert', *Mitteilungen des Bulgarischen Forschungsinstitut in Österreich*, 8 (1986), 150–52.

⁷¹ Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarischen Inschriften*, p. 216 no. 46. The year from creation and indiction suggests AD 908. A second, similar pillar was found nearby, also at Nea Philadelphia near Thessaloniki. It too called itself 'oros' (Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, p. 18). See Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago, 1960), p. 16, on such 'phallic' border markers. It is suggestive that a Latin author like Anastasius compared the impassive Bulgar khan Boris to a column (he hardly twitched while querulous Greek envoys bid for his allegiance and remained 'ut columna'). See *Anastasii epistulae sive praefationes*, ed. by E. Perels and G. Laehr (Berlin, 1928), MGH Epistulae 7:413. Perhaps pillars were less phallic than royal symbols.

⁷² See van Gennep, *The Rites*, p. 15, on local knowledge of boundaries, even unmarked, which states imperiously ignore, needing to 'demonstrate' them physically. I disagree with Paul Stephenson (*Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, p. 6) that 'horos' implied 'a fixed linear border'.

⁷³ Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, p. 19, on the custom of passing between or under symbolic objects when crossing borders. See also *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social*

intangible line on one side of which they claimed sovereignty. Words on the markers reinforced the mental boundaries, evoking the name of the ruler, for those who could decipher it, and his power over writing, for all. How seriously medieval people took such invisible lines, even when the sovereignty they represented was defunct, can be seen in the twelfth-century vandalization of these border markers by the Asens of Tărnovo. The pillars were not neutral objects, and their destruction was integral to a symbolic appropriation of land and authority.⁷⁴

In Bulgaria, stone markers, a preferred medium in the Mediterranean, found favour too, though wooden posts were also known.⁷⁵ Everywhere, natural features like watercourses or mountains were used as coat hooks over which to hang the artificial divisions rulers enforced.⁷⁶ Overall, the Bulgar state seems to have employed the same boundary markers as the Byzantine Empire, and these created real though insensible divisions which did not require continuous excavated or built-up lines to be drawn on the land.⁷⁷ Like Khan Omurtag's pile of earth midway between his residences,⁷⁸ the Bulgar delimitations and markers that we know about relied on the beholder to formulate the appropriate dividing, or joining, line in the mind's eye.

Such intangible and contextual lines have very hard edges, as several Latin observers noted in the ninth century. The boundaries of Illyricum, as the Latins rather vaguely called the Balkan peninsula, and especially that part of it over which they thought the pope held jurisdiction, were a hotly contested topic in the ninth century,

Organisation of Culture Difference, ed. by Fredrick Barth (Bergen, 1969), pp. 9–10 and 15–16, on the social construction of boundaries.

⁷⁴ Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, p. 306.

⁷⁵ Prescott, *Political Frontiers*, pp. 76–77; D. Werkmüller, 'Recinzioni, confini et segni territoriali', in *Simboli e simbologia nell'alto Medioevo*, Settimani di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 23 (Spoleto, 1976), p. 645; Veselin Beshevliev, 'Die Kaiseridee bei den Protobulgaren', *Byzantina*, 3 (1971), 86, on stones; Velizar Velkov, *Cities in Thrace and Dacia in Late Antiquity* (Amsterdam, 1977), pp. 72–74, on posts.

⁷⁶ Paul Stephenson, 'The Byzantine Frontier at the Lower Danube in the Late Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700–1700*, ed. by Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (New York, 1999), pp. 81 and 97, and *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, p. 5; Chrysos, 'Die Nordgrenze', pp. 29, 32, and 37–38; Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, pp. 306–07.

⁷⁷ Chrysos, 'Die Nordgrenze', p. 29. However, the Arab polymath al-Masudi thought that the Long Walls across the Propontis were the single significant feature between the Danube and the Aegean. To him, this artificial landscape feature constituted the Balkans' two zones, bringing definiteness to what otherwise might be a blank slate: al-Masudi, *al-Tanbih wa-al-Ishraf*, trans. by B. Carra de Vaux (Paris, 1896), p. 248, and *Muruj al-dhahab*, trans. by Barbier de Meynard, Pavet de Courteille, and Charles Pellat, vol. I (Paris, 1962), pp. 164–65; Prescott, *Political Frontiers*, p. 45. Kaegi, 'The Frontier', pp. 285–86, offers comparative data on another Byzantine frontier whose physicality is elusive.

⁷⁸ Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarischen Inschriften*, p. 260 no. 55.

and had probably been so ever since the 730s, when Leo III had deprived Rome of its rights there. Anastasius, a learned papal official who often travelled east in the mid-800s, both to Bulgaria and Constantinople, wrote accusingly that the Greeks were ‘transferring ancient and native boundary markers’.⁷⁹ This, he saw, was part of the Byzantine strategy of destabilization aimed at winning ecclesiastical hegemony over the Balkans for the Patriarch of Constantinople. Anastasius’s sense that boundary markers are fixed and eternal and that shifting them and authority over them is deeply wrong is enlightening. An ‘oros’ (which he called ‘terminus’) ought to have all the stability possible in human affairs. For Anastasius, in other words, Balkan boundary lines were clear and indisputable thanks to boundary markers. They required no further reinforcements.

A similar sense of the rigidity which was possible along the theoretical, intangible line dividing Byzantium from Bulgaria emerges from the unfortunate adventure of a papal embassy attempting to cross the line in 867. The rites of passage which the envoys underwent included forty days in captivity, for they travelled on public, obvious routes and ran into a Byzantine official with explicit instructions to prevent their entry into the Empire as part of a diplomatic rebuff to Rome. If what could, evidently, happen to Bulgar border guards who were lax in their vigilance over border crossing points could also happen to Byzantines, the official was well advised to carry out the emperor’s orders scrupulously.⁸⁰

In the Balkans, it seems, rulers took the assertion of sovereignty at special points along the imaginary dividing line very seriously.⁸¹ They also appear to have had a deep-rooted sense of territorial authority, as suggested by an episode in the *Chronography* of the Byzantine historian Theophanes. He recounted how, in the negotiations with the victorious, seemingly unstoppable Krum, who drank from the skull of a Byzantine emperor and who presented a list of demands to the Empire in 812, the

⁷⁹ *Anastasii epistulae*, MGH Epistulae 7:412, protests that ‘patrios et antiquos terminos transferunt’.

⁸⁰ Epistle 99 in *Nicolae papae epistulae*, ed. by E. Perels (Berlin, 1925), MGH Epistulae 6:579, says that near ‘terminos’ Bulgar vigilance is customary and that guards were responsible with their lives for any who slipped through during their watch. Jireček, *Geschichte der Bulgaren*, p. 133, first called attention to this detail. *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. by L. Duchesne (Paris, 1955), p. 165, relates of the events ‘inter fines Vulgariae et Constantinopolitanorum’ and calls the zone a ‘marcham’, a spatial, non-linear notion.

⁸¹ One reason for their vigilance, naturally, was economic. Like most early medieval rulers, khans and emperors sought to control, and if possible profit from, the flow of goods across their states; the negotiations between the khans and emperors in the years around 800 (Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. by de Boor, pp. 497–98, trans. by Mango and Scott, pp. 681–82, discusses them) are an index of this. See Nicolas Oikonomides, ‘Le kommerkion d’Abydos, Thessalonique et le commerce bulgare au IX^e siècle’, in *Hommes et richesses dans l’Empire byzantin*, ed. by V. Kravari, J. Lefort, and C. Morrisson (Paris, 1991), pp. 243–48; Robert Lopez, ‘Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire’, *Speculum*, 20 (1945), 31–32.

decisive issue was one of territorial sovereignty. The Emperor Michael, in fact, decided that the Gospels required him to protect all the people who had sought asylum from the Bulgar yoke in his lands. He therefore made the difficult and costly decision not to hand over the refugees, as Krum demanded, and to prepare for the inevitable further hostilities.⁸² The Empire's soil was a haven whose sacrosanctity the Emperor felt bound to uphold even with an enemy force encamped on it. It was a non-negotiable space of sanctuary for those who entered it seeking hospitality. It was not, however, necessary to erect a material reinforcement to the border for this understanding of sovereignty and its assertion at border-crossings to have effect. No sources describing entry into or exit from Bulgaria, nor Theophanes' account of Michael's idea of territorial responsibility, introduce any linear embankments or other physical barriers along the border.

Bulgar khans and Byzantine emperors combined ferocious territoriality with ambiguous borders, marked by fixed points, along which, at certain places, the rulers could and did exercise stringent control. In such a context the Dobrudjan dikes would have made anomalous, and illogically time-consuming, signals of sovereignty.

Ditches and Bodies

At decisive moments in Bulgar history, giant ditches were dug, or were thought to have been dug, into Bulgarian soil in places with special significance to the Bulgars, like Dobrudja and Pliska. By and large, these fosses seem unjustified by their potential military-tactical utility. Similarly, the earthen structures do not make comprehensible border markers, coherent with what we know of Bulgar borders and history. This investigation therefore risks leaving us more puzzles than we started out with. There are excellent reasons why a less certain, trenchant posture is preferable with regards to Bulgar history, but some tentative suggestions for understanding the monumental trenches of Bulgaria are still possible.

The Pliskan earthworks show every sign of having been planned and executed in a single campaign, in a relatively short period of time, and according to a single master-plan. Taken singly, the Dobrudja's earthworks also reflect coherent blueprints. Though castles were rebuilt on a smaller scale soon after the Great earthwork was finished and the stone wall and its twenty-six forts may be an 'afterthought' atop

⁸² Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. by de Boor, p. 503, trans. by Mango and Scott, p. 686, says that Krum admired the city walls. The episode is on pp. 497–98. Krum is supposed to have asked for the 'old' border and its markers (*oria*). Theophanes disapproved of Michael's idealism. See Bury, *History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, pp. 348–49; Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, pp. 256–64; Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 183–85. Ivan Duichev, 'I "responsa" di papa Nicolò I ai Bulgari neoconvertiti', in his *Medioevo bizantino-slavo*, II, 167, points out that control of people was of greater interest to Bulgar khans than control of land.

an older dike, each of the ditch-and-rampart structures appears to be the fruit of a single, concerted effort of construction.⁸³ The rapidity of execution implied by the uniformity of excavation visible in these structures needs to be considered carefully. The dikes demanded greater concentration of labour than projects which dragged out over several decades might. This means that large numbers of people were involved in the digging. Similarly, large numbers would have been called for in the event that a dike required restoration, which may be what the Bulgars contributed to the Dobrudjan ones. The process of digging Bulgaria's great trenches involved many thousands of people and therefore was a feat of organization. This feat was integral, I would suggest, to the significance of the structures. To the *Vision* writer, as we have seen, making a dike was as much an occasion for the khans to triumph over the mundane impediments of landscape, labour, and logistics as was founding a city.

The labourers who enabled this khalal triumph, and who were its first audience, remain faceless and nameless in the surviving sources. Yet their identities are suggested by the division of labour that seems to have prevailed in the khans' lands. Over early Bulgaria there presided a bipartite ruling group, sustaining cultural practices linked to the nomadic, pastoral steppe world. This elite had special status and functions unlike those assigned to the remainder of the population.⁸⁴ While the former Byzantine subjects continued to farm, Slavic peasants settled the khanate's rural territories, producing crops in novel ways and redesigning settlement patterns.⁸⁵ In sum, in a culturally and even ethnically mixed population, the ruling class of Bulgars, some of whom farmed and tended herds, separated itself from a subaltern class

⁸³ As the fill from a ditch is not enough to make most ramparts, even the southern ditch on the Great earthwork could be part of the original builders' effort. See B. Hobbley, 'An Experimental Reconstruction of a Roman Military Turf Rampart', in *Roman Frontier Studies 1967: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress Held at Tel Aviv*, ed. by Shimon Applebaum (Tel Aviv, 1971), pp. 23 and 33.

⁸⁴ On the distinctiveness of Bulgar culture, see Duichev, 'Una pagina', pp. 5–12, and 'Protobulgares et Slaves (Sur le problème de la formation de l'Etat bulgare)', *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, 10 (1938), 145–54; Pritsak, *Die bulgarische Fürstenliste*; Dimităr Angelov, *Die Entstehung des bulgarischen Volkes* (Berlin, 1980), pp. 96–105; Halperin, 'Bulgars and Slavs', pp. 191–99; Giuzelev, *Medieval Bulgaria*, pp. 43–44. On the social structure of Bulgaria, see Giuzelev, *Medieval Bulgaria*, pp. 43–50, and p. 87 on 'task-work'.

⁸⁵ See Henning, *Südosteuropa* and 'Vom Herrschaftszentrum zur städtischen Großsiedlung', on agrarian society. Though the Greek-speaking population is not mentioned much in the sources, and its impact has been minimized (e.g. John V. A. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor, 1983), p. 68), recently their importance has been re-evaluated: Mark Whittow, *The Making of Byzantium, 600–1025* (Berkeley, 1996), pp. 273–74; J. D. Howard-Johnston, 'Urban Continuity in the Balkans in the Early Middle Ages', in *Ancient Bulgaria*, ed. by Poulter, pp. 242–43 and 249; Angelov, *Die Entstehung*, pp. 97–99.

of 'Roman' and Slavic peasant cultivators.⁸⁶ In the latter group, military responsibilities were limited and exceptional.⁸⁷ Soldiering was a Bulgar prerogative, even if some Bulgars had little taste for it.⁸⁸ This suggests that when large numbers of diggers were called for, it was predominantly non-Bulgar farmers who had to respond to the call.⁸⁹ Thus, the dikes served the khans also as a demonstration of appropriate ethnic and social relations.

⁸⁶ I do not wish to imply that ethnicity was any more rigid, fixed, stable in this area than elsewhere in early medieval Europe. Indeed, it was a 'situational construct' in the Balkans as in Western Europe. See, for an example of fluidity, Paul Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, vol. II (Paris, 1981), pp. 227–34.

⁸⁷ Even though Theophanes, famously, recorded the example of the Slavic Severeis whom Asparuch relocated to the south-western edge of his dominions as a buffer against Byzantine attacks, and though there are a few other instances in which Slavic fighters accompanied Bulgar army expeditions, probably as mercenaries, it was only in extremities that the khans recruited non-Bulgar military help (in 716 at Constantinople and perhaps in 811 in the Stara Planina Mountains). See Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. by de Boor, p. 359, trans. by Mango and Scott, p. 499. Patriarch Nicephorus, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. by de Boor, p. 70, and the *Chronicle of 811* (Duichev, 'La chronique byzantine', p. 434, and 'Nouvelles données hagiographiques sur l'invasion de Nicéphore I en Bulgarie au cours de 811', in his *Medioevo bizantino-slavo*, I, 187–88) show occasional Slavic involvement in Bulgar wars. See Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria*, pp. 114–34; Angelov, *Die Entstehung*, p. 97; Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, pp. 244, 280, and 347–54, on the allocation of military duty. Vasil N. Zlatarski, *Geschichte der Bulgaren*, vol. I (Leipzig, 1917), p. 14, thought the Slavs were assigned border guard-duty, exaggerating the Severeis episode. Slavic subjection, measured in tribute paid to the khans, is treated by Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria*, p. 187; Vasil Giuzelev, 'Allgemeine Charakteristik und Etappen der Errichtung der militärischen und administrativen Verwaltung des Ersten bulgarischen Staates (VII. bis IX. Jh.)', *Etudes Balkaniques*, 14 (1978), 72–74; Halperin, 'Bulgars and Slavs', pp. 183–200; Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, pp. 68–69; Soustal, *Thrakien*, p. 77. The classic on Bulgar-Slav relations is Duichev, 'Protobulgares et Slaves', pp. 67–82. See also Uwe Fiedler, 'Die Slawen im Bulgarenreich und im Awarenkhanat: Versuch eines Vergleichs', in *Ethnische und kulturelle Verhältnisse an der mittleren Donau vom 6. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert: Symposium Nitra 6. bis 10. November 1994*, ed. by D. Bialeková and J. Zábojník (Bratislava, 1996), pp. 195–214.

⁸⁸ Judging from the draconian measures necessary in the 860s against foot-draggers, those who showed up for service late, and those who came improperly equipped: the *Responsa* of Pope Nicholas I (*Nicolae papae epistulae*, MGH Epistulae 6:579 and 582) reveal horror at the penalties inflicted on imperfect recruits.

⁸⁹ Though ditch-digging required minimal qualifications, that did not mean early medieval people wanted to do it: shortly before 813, the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus himself had to sedate a mutiny among his troops when a rumour spread to the effect that once they had marched to Serdica they would have to rebuild its fortifications, a task they considered onerous and unsoldierly. See Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. by de Boor, p. 485, trans. by Mango and Scott, p. 666.

Such symbolic use of concrete things was not unknown to Bulgar rulers. In the case of Khan Krum, Byzantine sources describe an efficient user of symbolic communication who dug up the soil on a grand scale to send messages to onlookers. In July of 813, Krum had a ditch dug outside Constantinople's walls, as part of a show of bravado designed to humiliate Leo V, a sign of Bulgar permanence and ability to manoeuvre the Byzantine soil with impunity. Perhaps the associations of earth in Bulgar culture gave Krum's manipulation of it special semiotic impact. Before Christianity won hegemony, it seems the Bulgars held soil in high repute, attributing divine creative powers to it.⁹⁰ Byzantine chronicles of events after Nicephorus's death in 811 reported, in scandalized tones, that the Bulgar khan expected the Byzantine emperor to seal ritually the diplomatic agreements by pouring libations into the earth.⁹¹ In a culture that held soil to be sacral, causing it to be dug up and piled very visibly alongside the cut must have been ominous. To the Bulgars, the ditch and rampart may have signalled a special kind of entente between the khans and the divine forces.⁹² Though Bulgar religiosity is shadowy, this episode is clear evidence of the willingness to use landscape and specifically earthen marks on it to inform spectators. For a khan like Krum, a fosse was an occasion to spar, in the ideological arena, with his rivals, and also, perhaps, to make a point with his soldiers.

Philological evidence suggests that forced labour was not an indigenous concept to the Bulgars: in medieval Bulgaria, the word for *corvée* was of Persian derivation, an importation.⁹³ In the early Middle Ages, coerced services did exist, and sometimes they were extracted from the Bulgars' subalterns. Occasional specialized artisanal work, for instance, helped to enhance the status of khans and elite Bulgars.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, p. 364. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 200, made no tactical sense of Krum's ditch. Naturally, suburban excavations did not all have pagan significance: one hundred years later a Byzantine emperor placed a pre-emptive defensive trench outside Constantinople's wall when the Bulgars approached the city (Rashev, *Starobălgarski ukrepleniia*, p. 18).

⁹¹ Theophanes is not specific about the devilish practices Krum indulged in in the meadow outside Constantinople, but Ignatios's *Vita Nicephori* says that the Bulgars cast water onto the ground to seal pacts. See Bury, *History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, p. 362; Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, pp. 376–80; Dimităr Angelov, 'The Ideas of "macrocosmos" (the Universe) in Medieval Bulgarian Literature', *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 11 (1983), p. 71.

⁹² Ditches also had a kind of sacrality in Roman times, long after Remus's impudent leap: *Digest* 49.16.3, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. by Paul Krüger, Theodor Mommsen, Rudolf Schöll, and Wilhelm Kroll, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1954), demands discharge of soldiers who cross their camp ditches without permission.

⁹³ Ivan Duichev, 'Il mondo slavo e la Persia nell'alto medioevo', *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, 363 (1966), 243–318.

⁹⁴ Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria*, pp. 48 and 112. Giuzelev, *Medieval Bulgaria*, p. 87, claims that Bulgar nobles extracted ill-defined 'task-work' from Bulgar peasants, but furnishes no evidence beyond presumed class relations.

Yet in the last analysis the khans did not lay claim to their subjects' working hours in a direct or systematic fashion. Even as the state apparatus grew in the ninth century, requisitioning subjects' work is not prominent in the surviving record. For this reason, the early Bulgarian earthworks were especially important. They offered a unique occasion for rulers to exercise power over the bodies of those whom they ruled by having them handle the soil. Landscape theorists believe that the erection of human structures in a space is the most usual mechanism for investing that space with meaning, for turning it into a territory. In Tuan's limpid formulation, buildings turn space into place by creating cultural associations the locals can share.⁹⁵ Earthworks like those around Pliska or crisscrossing Dobrudja, whether freshly built or hurriedly restored, can thus have served to turn anonymous spaces into meaningful places. Unlike ephemera, for example the triumphal processions Byzantine rulers favoured, and unlike fragile creations such as brick buildings, the Bulgar dikes radiated the khans' glories across the cultural landscape they fashioned.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ See Yi-fu Tuan, 'Thought and Landscape: The Eye and the Mind's Eye', in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, ed. D. W. Meinig (New York, 1979), p. 90, and *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, 1977), pp. 6, 54, and 159; Charles Blanc-Panard and Laurence Quinty-Bourgeois, 'Introduction', in *Les territoires de l'identité*, ed. by Joël Bonnemaïson (Paris, 1999), pp. 11–12; Luc Cambrézy, 'Introduction', in *La nation et le territoire*, ed. by Joël Bonnemaïson (Paris, 1999), p. 15. Also, see Gérard Chouquer, 'La place de l'analyse des systèmes spatiaux dans l'étude des paysages du passé', in *Les formes du paysage*, vol. III: *L'analyse des systèmes spatiaux*, ed. by Gérard Chouquer (Paris, 1997), p. 19, and Peter A. Coates, *Nature: Western Attitudes Since Ancient Times* (Berkeley, 1998), p. 46, on the 'landscape of power' as places where nature is reconfigured as property, linked to dispossession (in this case Byzantium's).

⁹⁶ My thanks to Florin Curta, whose generosity and bibliographical prowess improved this paper.

Reconceptualizing the Seljuk-Cilician Frontier: Armenians, Latins, and Turks in Conflict and Alliance during the Early Thirteenth Century

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Introduction

Nationalist agendas continue to shape the writing of the history of the multi-ethnic and politically fragmented Anatolia. Modern nationalist frameworks have determined how the polities of the Anatolian Seljuk sultanate (c. 1086–c. 1308) and the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia (1198–1375) have been conceived by scholars and laymen alike. Any attempt to treat the history of either in an unbiased way and escape the distortions of nationalist historiography will ultimately fail without first exploiting all available documentary and narrative sources, whether they represent a Muslim or a Christian perspective, and without integrating the two mutually exclusive and, at times, incompatible strands of scholarship on the respective polities. With this in mind, I will explore the interethnic relations between Seljuks, Cilician Armenians, and Turkmen in the frontier region of south-central Anatolia, a topic which has received scant attention by historians to date, and an examination of which necessitates exploitation of the sources and scholarship from both sides. It is by integrating these two fields of historiography into a cohesive narrative that one can begin to reveal the fault lines of nationalist paradigms which obscure the complexities of the mutual relations of these groups.

The medieval sources as well as modern works dealing with the history of the medieval polities of the Anatolian Seljuks and the Cilician Armenians, taken on their own, are highly biased and full of lacunae, especially in regard to their mutual relations and interaction along their common frontier. Osman Turan and other scholars of the Anatolian Seljuk sultanate make the exaggerated claim that the Armenian king of Cilicia, Lewon I, was reduced to vassalage by the Seljuks. According to Turan and others, the Seljuks succeeded in conquering the western part of Cilician Armenia

in the mid-1220s and organized it into a frontier province which subsequently became populated with Turkmen as a result of a conscious settlement policy by the Seljuks, in itself a defensive measure against Armenian aggression from over the border.¹ However, this modern construction of Seljuk authority in the frontier is both inaccurate (for instance, Lewon I was never reduced to vassal status by the Seljuks, as numismatic evidence proves) and incomplete, for it does not consult Armenian, Latin, or Oriental Christian sources in its depiction of Seljuk-Armenian relations. First, it fails to consider the greater regional political context in which Seljuk conquests of Armenian Cilician territory along the frontier occurred. Nor does it assign an active role to the Karamanid Turkmen who, I contend, emerged as an independent local power on the frontier and a rival to both Seljuk and Armenian authority in the region. In fact, in the 1250s, an important contemporary Armenian source shows the Cilician Armenian king Hetum and his general Smbat defending the Seljuk-Cilician frontier against Turkmen aggression led by a certain Karaman who was in open rebellion against Seljuk authority, an incongruous situation to the imagined unified Turkish community under Seljuk rule vs. the hostile Armenians at the border.

The study of the Turco-Iranian Seljuk sultanate ruling in Anatolia from the late eleventh century to the end of the thirteenth has been, for the most part, founded on, as well as driven by, modern nationalist concerns. Modern Anatolian Seljuk studies in early Republican Turkey developed in conjunction with the notion that the Anatolian Seljuk polity, or 'Empire', as it is commonly referred to, was a Turkish precursor to the modern state of Turkey.² Jos Gommans's characterization of empires as 'falsely depicted as precursors of modernity and hence as durable and centralizing entities'³ aptly reflects how the Anatolian Seljuk 'Empire' has been imagined. According to Osman Turan, the foremost scholar of Anatolian Seljuk history, pre-modern 'Turkey' of the Seljuk period had an integrated, homogeneous, state-centred culture. Turan's characterization of the Seljuks follows along the lines of the 'strong state', a political model popular throughout the Republican period in the modern

¹ Osman Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye: Siyasi Tarih Alp Arsan'dan Osman Gazi'ye (1071–318)*, 3rd edn (Istanbul, 1993); Mehmet Fuad Köprülü, 'Anadolu beylikleri tarihine ait notlar', *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, 2 (1928), 15; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, 'Karaman oğulları', in his *Anadolu Beylikleri ve Akkoyunlu, Karakoyunlu Devletleri* (Ankara, 1937; repr. 1988), p. 1; M. C. Şihabeddin Tekindağ, s.v. 'Karamanlılar', in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. VI (Istanbul, 1955), p. 317; M. C. Şehabettin Tekindağ, 'Karaman beyliği (XIII–XIV. asırda cenubi Anadolu tarihine ait tetkik)' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Istanbul University, Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü, 1947), p. 5; Claude Cahen, 'Notes pour l'histoire des Turcomans d'Asie Mineure au XIII^e siècle', *Journal Asiatique*, 3 (1951), 340.

² *A History of the Seljuks: İbrahim Kafesoğlu's Interpretation and the Resulting Controversy*, trans. and ed. by Gary Leiser (Carbondale, 1988), p. 10.

³ Jos Gommans, 'The Silent Frontier of South Asia, c. A.D. 1100–1800', *Journal of World History*, 9.1 (1998), 3.

history of Turkey.⁴ Furthermore, integral to Turan's scholarship steeped in Turkish nationalism is the writing out of the Armenian kingdom in Cilicia as a significant player, especially the important King Lewon I (1198–1219), from the historical narrative of medieval Anatolia. Corollary to the modern desire to imagine a unified Turkish Anatolian Seljuk Empire is the assigning of a passive role to ethnically Turkish rival polities of the Seljuks. Hence, according to Turkish historiography, the Karamanid Turkmen arrived in western Rough Cilicia as the result of a Seljuk 'settlement' policy, not as a consequence of independent migrations and autonomous attempts to seize power and control resources.

In striking contrast to the depiction of the Seljuks as Turkish 'state-builders', Turkish historiography portrays Cilician Armenians as incapable of state building and casts them into the role of subject rather than ruler, the symbolic perpetual vassal under the domination of other powers, whether Christian or Muslim.⁵ Yet, if one looks at the historical record more closely, taking into account a diverse set of sources, a different picture emerges, especially in regard to the reign of the founder of the Cilician Armenian kingdom, Lewon I. A power to be reckoned with, Lewon I's territorial designs and expansionist policies in his borders inevitably led to regional conflict involving not only the Latin Christian polities of the eastern Mediterranean but the Muslim Seljuks of Anatolia and the Ayyubids of Syria as well.

Armenian sources and scholarship focusing on the Cilician Armenian kingdom likewise present significant lacunae and distortions, especially in the relations with Seljuks and Turkmen. Studies on Cilician Armenia with a nationalistic bent, such as the recent work of Jacob G. Ghazarian, *The Armenian Kingdom in Cilicia during the Crusades*, conceive of medieval Cilician Armenians as long-suffering yet resilient communities exiled from the original ancient homeland and fully conscious of their national identity.⁶ Thus, whereas the historiography on the Seljuks exaggerates the

⁴ The notion of a long line of pre-modern Turkish 'state-builders' beginning with the Islamic Orhan Turkish state in Inner Asia and culminating with the Ottomans has dominated modern nationalist Turkish historiography. See Halil Berktaş, 'Three Empires and the Societies they Governed: Iran, India, and the Ottoman Empire', *Peasant Studies*, 18 (1991), 109–85, regarding this idea and its influence on Turkish historiography. İbrahim Kafesoğlu, in his article 'Seljuks' in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. III (Istanbul, 1964), p. 15, states that 'the Turks were known as state founders, that is, for their habit of establishing public laws, from the moment they appeared on the scene of history'. Bahaeddin Ögel's work, *Türklerde Devlet Anlayışı* (Ankara, 1982) is typical of this vein of nationalist scholarship.

⁵ Certain strains of Turkish historiography go as far as denying the existence of an independent Armenian polity in Cilicia, as in Mehlika Aktok Kaşgarlı, *Kilikya Tabi Ermeni Baronluğu Tarihi* (Ankara, 1990).

⁶ Ghazarian writes that 'it is the singular purpose of this book to bring into focus the all-important medieval history of the Armenians of Cilicia, and to show how their successes and failure there came to shape the future of their race and the perpetuation to this day of their conviction in the legitimacy of the uniquely Armenian non-Chalcedonian Christianity'.

nature of Armenian vassalage to the Seljuks and the extent of Seljuk conquest in Armenian lands, the historiography on the Armenians does not acknowledge the full impact of Seljuk expansionist policies in the Armenian kingdom. One glaring example is the consistent omission of the major Seljuk campaign of 1225–26 leading to significant conquests in western and north-eastern Cilicia as well as of the Cilician king Hetum I's acknowledgment of Seljuk overlordship.⁷ Furthermore, the more nationalist-oriented historiography of the Cilician Armenian kingdom, in a vein similar to Turkish nationalist historiography, does not consider how these events evolved in the context of the greater regional conflict in the eastern Mediterranean over control of important centres such as Antioch.

By tracing the relations between the Seljuk sultanate of Anatolia and the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia throughout the first few decades of the thirteenth century, I hope to provide a more cohesive political and military narrative of the Seljuk-Cilician frontier. As a corrective to the traditional historical narrative which remains biased towards the centre, ignores local dynamics, and fails to recognize the multiplicity of political actors, I also consider the Seljuk-Cilician frontier from the periphery. What was the relationship between local magnates in the marginal frontier region and the Seljuk sultan and officials? In the second part of this essay, I attempt to tackle this problem by examining two depictions of the emerging power of the Turkmen Karamanid dynasty along the Seljuk-Cilician frontier as found in two sources entirely independent of one another: the sixteenth-century Turkish local history of the Karamanids composed by a certain Şikari, and the mid-thirteenth-century Armenian chronicle of Smbat the Constable.

Expansionist Policies among Seljuks and Armenians

The Seljuk sultans of the early thirteenth century waged war not only on the Cilician Armenians, but also on Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights, who were granted the task of defending Armenian fortresses along the frontier.⁸ Conflict with the Cilician Armenians was precipitated by Lewon I's aggressive designs on territory to the east and west of his kingdom: not only did Lewon encroach upon the Seljuk-Cilician

Jacob G. Ghazarian, *The Armenian Kingdom in Cilicia during the Crusades: The Integration of Cilician Armenians with the Latins, 1080–1393* (Surrey, 2000), p. 25. He further states that 'the history of the Armenians in Cilicia is an example of a people who had the courage and determination to forge ahead with the vision of an independent state encompassed in territories which were essentially removed from their native historical homeland far to the east in the Caucasus' (p. 53). He continues in this vein, attributing a nationalist consciousness to Cilician Armenians of the thirteenth century: 'The Hetumians hoped to foster a new wave of Armenian nationalism' (p. 54).

⁷ E.g. Robert Hewesen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago, 2001).

⁸ Christopher Marshall, *Warfare in the Latin East, 1192–1291* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 56–64.

Armenian frontier through seizure of fortresses in Rough Cilicia, both along the Mediterranean coastline and deep into the highlands of inner Taurus, but he also threatened Syria with intentions to conquer Antioch.

The Armenians of Cilicia became an important regional power in the late twelfth century under the leadership of Lewon I, a member of the Rubenid family,⁹ who with the backing of Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) became an integral part of the western Crusade project. As a result of his ambition to establish control over the Cilician Plain and Antioch, Lewon I found himself in conflict with the crusaders. He had had his eye on Antioch ever since he, while still a baron, had seized Baghras,¹⁰ a strategic fortress just outside Antioch, which the Templars regarded as their property. This event took place at some point between 1188 and 1191.¹¹ He was able to make his first power play for the principality following his involvement in Barbarossa's crusade when, in 1191, he sent an Armenian contingent to the crusader camp at Acre, and he himself participated in King Richard's conquest of Cyprus. Using Baghras as bait, Lewon promised to discuss the possession of this fortress with Bohemund III, Prince of Antioch; instead, the Armenian king seized him and held him for ransom. Bohemund was released through negotiations held in Sis on the part

⁹ The founder of the Rubenid dynasty, Ruben, was a chieftain loyal to, and presumably a relative of, the exiled Bagratid king, Gagik II, who after losing Ani, resettled in Caesarea (Cappadocia). As the tradition goes, Gagik's son was kidnapped and held at the fortress of Lampron and married to the daughter of Apllar, an Armenian general in the Byzantine army. Gagik himself was murdered by the Armeno-Byzantine forces when he went to ransom his son, and Ruben, in Gagik's retinue, fled for his life to the fort of Kopitar in Cilicia. Toros I (d. 1129), son of Constantine and grandson of Ruben, seized the fortress of Anavarza in 1111, thus gaining the distinction of being the first Armenian leader to establish a permanent settlement in the plain. See Robert W. Edwards, *The Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia* (Washington, 1987), p. 5.

¹⁰ The fortress of Baghras was a remote post of enormous strategic and political importance on the frontier north of Antioch. Located in the Amanus region in the border land which by nature belonged to neither Syria nor Anatolia, it guarded the route going through the Amanus pass. This important stronghold went back and forth between Armenian, Muslim, and crusader hands: it became the Templars' northern headquarters during the second half of the twelfth century until they lost it to Saladin in 1188. It was then seized by Lewon who installed his seneschal, Adam, as the castle's lord from 1198 to 1215/16, when it was returned to the Templars. It witnessed several unsuccessful sieges by the Muslim ruler of Aleppo in 1226 and 1236. The second Templar occupation ended with the collapse of the Principality of Antioch upon Baybars's invasion of 1268. See A. W. Lawrence, 'The Castle of Baghras', in *The Cilician Kingdom of Armenia*, ed. by T. S. R. Boase (Edinburgh, 1978), pp. 33–46.

¹¹ While Boase gives the date of 1188, Der Nersessian dates this event to 1191. See T. S. R. Boase, 'The History of the Kingdom', in *Cilician Kingdom of Armenia*, ed. by Boase, p. 18; Sirapie Der Nersessian, 'The Kingdom of Cilician Armenia', in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. II: *The Later Crusades, 1189–1311*, ed. by Robert Lee Wolff and Harry W. Hazard (Madison, 1969), p. 646.

of Henry of Champagne, the new king-consort of Jerusalem, yet Lewon retained Baghras. Part of the negotiations included marrying Alice, the elder daughter of his brother Rupen II, to Bohemund's eldest son, Raymond.¹² Raymond, the son and heir of Bohemund III, died in 1197, leaving behind his son Raymond-Rupen, posthumously born to his wife, Alice. Lewon I thus had claims to the throne of Antioch as regent to his underage great-nephew, and, as Boase pointed out, 'his great-nephew's accession to Antioch, uniting thereby, as he had no son, Armenia and Antioch, now became the corner-stone of Lewon's policy'.¹³ This plan was endorsed by the papal legate and the Antiochene barons swore allegiance to the child. When Bohemund too died in 1201, the ground had long since been laid for a succession struggle that would not be settled for another twenty years. Bohemund le Borgne of Tripoli, Bohemund III's second son, naturally claimed the succession, and was strongly supported by the Templars who resented the loss of Baghras to the Armenian king. Both sides appealed to the Pope and this struggle was to be a main preoccupation for Innocent III.¹⁴

The dispute over the right of succession became a long, dragged-out affair which raged throughout the early years of the thirteenth century, involving all the local powers of the region, including the Seljuks.¹⁵ The quarrel with the Templars over possession of the castle of Baghras likewise proceeded for many years, during which Lewon I steadfastly held onto the stronghold, with his seneschal Adam acting as the castle's lord.¹⁶ Throughout this power struggle over the succession in Antioch, Raymond-Rupen, Lewon I's candidate for the throne, safely resided at the fortress of Baghras. For almost twenty years, Lewon played a game of promising and protracting negotiations over the return of the fortress, a behaviour that resulted in his excommunication by the Pope, one of the central figures in these negotiations.¹⁷

Lewon I likewise pursued an aggressive policy of expansion into the western part of Rough Cilicia, along the border with the Seljuks. Bar Hebraeus informs us that Lewon's expansionism was directed not only to the east towards Antioch, but also on his other frontiers: 'Lewon became very powerful following the death of Kılıç Arslān. He captured seventy-two fortresses from both the Turks and the Greeks, and

¹² Boase, 'History of the Kingdom', pp. 18–19; Der Nersessian, 'Kingdom of Cilician Armenia', p. 646.

¹³ Boase, 'History of the Kingdom', p. 18.

¹⁴ Boase, 'History of the Kingdom', p. 19.

¹⁵ For the only in-depth treatment of the power struggle over Antioch, see Claude Cahen, *La Syrie du nord à l'époque des croisades et la principauté franque d'Antioche* (Paris, 1940), pp. 598–635.

¹⁶ Lawrence, 'Castle of Baghras', p. 42.

¹⁷ Jonathan S. C. Riley-Smith, 'The Templars and the Teutonic Knights in Cilician Armenia', in *Cilician Kingdom of Armenia*, ed. by Boase, pp. 101–02.

was victorious in all battles.¹⁸ During the intervening years after the death of Sultan Kılıç Arslān II in 1192 and Kaykhusraw's second reign beginning in 1205, a period of instability afflicted the Seljuk ruling house, and the Seljuk territories contracted significantly. Lewon, while still a baron, expanded his frontier in the west by taking advantage of Seljuk internal instability. He seized Byzantine and Seljuk fortresses in Rough Cilicia and granted them to castle wardens loyal to him. As a result, the Armenian-Seljuk borderland began to encroach on Seljuk territory not far from the Seljuk capital of Konya and the important town of Laranda, the point where the plains ended and the mountains of Rough Cilicia began. The list of the Cilician barons compiled in 1198 on the occasion of the coronation of Lewon I¹⁹ shows that various forts in the Rough Cilician region were at the time under the control of Armenian or Greek castle wardens who recognized the suzerainty of Lewon I. From information contained in that list, we learned that the Armenians controlled a cluster of forts along the Göksu River in the triangular area between Laranda to the north, Ermenāk to the south-west, and Mut to the east of Ermenāk and directly south of Laranda: Siwil, on the banks of the upper Göksu between Laranda and Mut, was under the lordship of Oshin;²⁰ Sinit (Syneda, Sbide), slightly more than 12 miles to the north-west of Ermenāk, and Astaros (Astrsay or Adrasos), on the Göksu between Ermenāk and Laranda, was held by a Greek lord named Romanos.²¹ The fort of Lavzat, in the upper valley of the Ermenāk Su, a tributary of the Göksu River some 20 miles north-west of Ermenāk, and Tmitupawlis (Dindebolis or Domitiopolis),²² downstream on the Ermenāk Su from Lavzat, and north of Gargara (Güneyyurt),²³ were possessed by the Armenian lord Xrsawfawr.²⁴ Veresk, the site of which is the modern village of Fariske,²⁵ some 20 miles north-west of Ermenāk, was in the hands

¹⁸ Bar Hebraeus, *Abū'l-Farac Tarihi*, trans. by Ömer Rıza Doğrul, vol. II (Ankara, 1950), p. 466.

¹⁹ This coronation list is reproduced in the chronicle of Smbat the Constable. See *La chronique attribuée au connétable Smbat*, ed. by Gérard Dédéyan (Paris, 1980), p. 76 with n. 60.

²⁰ *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 76 with n. 60. See also W. M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (London, 1890), p. 369.

²¹ *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, pp. 79–80 with n. 63 and 69; 115 with n. 8.

²² Ramsay, *Historical Geography*, p. 369.

²³ The old name of Gargara is Güneyyurt. This town is located 12 km west of Ermenāk on the slopes of the mountains. See Halit Bardakçı, *Bütün Yönleriyle Ermenāk* (Konya, 1976), p. 544.

²⁴ Alishan identifies this fort with that of Lawsā. See P. L. M. Alishan, *Sissouan ou l'Arméno-Cilicie: Description géographique et historique* (Venice, 1899), p. 339. See also *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 79 n. 65.

²⁵ The villages of Fariske and Lamos are located in what is now the Göktepe subdistrict (bucak) of the province of Ermenāk. See Bardakçı, *Bütün Yönleriyle Ermenāk*, pp. 173 and 562.

of the Graeco-Armenian lord Nikifawr.²⁶ The fort of Ermenāk (called Djermanik/Žermanik on this list) and the forts of Maniawn (Manyan or Mennan²⁷), south-west of Laranda in the vicinity of the mountain pass at Bucakkışla,²⁸ and Lamaws (Lamos), the site of the modern village of Esentepe, located in the province of Ermenāk,²⁹ were in possession of a certain Halkam. Malva, or Maghva (rendered as Mafgha in Ibn Bībī), located near a small tributary of the upper Göksu River in the Pirinçsuyu gorge just north of the centre of Mut, was held by the Armenian lord of Greek origin, Kersak or Kyr Isaac, the son of Adam of Baghras.³⁰ Kyr Isaac also held Sigh (Sik) on the coast at the modern site of Softa Kalesi, 7.5 miles east of Anamur. The Mediterranean coast from the Cilician plain to Manavgat in the west was also under Armenian control. At the time of Lewon's coronation in 1198, Ermenāk as well as the twin fortresses of Camardias (Goumardias, Camardesium) and Norberd (Castellum Novum) near Silifke were in the hands of the *sebastos* Henry, a Graeco-Armenian originally in Byzantine service. Silifke was first seized in 1188 by Lewon and granted to the Armenian baron Shahinshah. At the time of the Armenian king's coronation, Silifke appears to have been in the hands of Henry's son, Constantine, who received rights to the castle after its previous lord Shahinshah had died in 1193. Constantine was also lord of another fort in the vicinity, namely Punar (Bounard), the location of which remains a mystery.³¹ Baldwin, another son of the *sebastos* Henry, held two fortresses in the vicinity as well, the first of which was called Kupa (Gouba), the location of which remains unknown, as well as the fortress known as Antchouzeda (Andawšc, Anduseh, Andusanj, Antioche de Cragus), the site of which

²⁶ *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 79 with n. 64.

²⁷ The Mennan fortress, one of the most impenetrable forts of its day, still stands, and is one of the most important historical sites in Ermenāk today. It stands on a precipice of the Mennan Mountain, with the Ermenāk Çayı valley to the north. See Bardakçı, *Bütün Yönleriyle Ermenāk*, pp. 173 and 562.

²⁸ *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 79 with n. 66.

²⁹ I agree with Ramsey's identification of Lamos as being north of Anamur rather than with Dédéyan's identification of Lamaws with Lamas between Ayas and Eğdir at the Lamas River, which seems too far removed from the forts of Mennan and Ermenāk and thus difficult to be held simultaneously by the same Armenian lord according to the 1198 coronation list. The village of Esentepe, formerly Lamos, on the other hand, lies a little west of Ermenāk in the district of Göktepe. See Bardakçı, *Bütün Yönleriyle Ermenāk*, p. 177.

³⁰ This is the same Kyr Isaac who in 1216 was captured by the Seljuks when attempting to relieve the besieged castle of Gaban, and was ransomed by Lewon I in 1218. Rüd̈t-Collenberg identifies him with the son of Adam of Baghras; see W. H. Rüd̈t-Collenberg, *The Rupenids, Hethumids and Lusignans: The Structure of the Armeno-Cilician Dynasties* (Paris, 1963), p. 60; T. S. R. Boase, 'Gazeteer', in *Cilician Kingdom of Armenia*, ed. by Boase, p. 171; *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 80 with n. 69. See also Ramsay, *Historical Geography*, p. 381.

³¹ *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 79 with n. 62; Boase, 'Gazeteer', pp. 151 and 175.

can be identified with the modern village of Endişegüney. The latter fortress was located in the mountain valley of the Göksu not far from Camardias on the coast.³²

To the west of Silifke and its cluster of forts lay Kelendris (Calendria, Chelindri, Gilindire, Celendere). It was located on the coast 29 miles east of Anamur on a road leading north to join the main Silifke-Karaman route.³³ Anamur (Anemourion) was first occupied by Lewon along with Silifke in 1188. To the west of Anamur lay Kalonoras (Candalore, today Alanya), which together with the neighbouring forts Ayžutab (Aydap, some 12 miles east of Kalonoras), Saint-Sophie (exact location unknown), and Nallawn (Juliosebastos or Nephelis, 12 miles east of Aydap)³⁴ were in the possession of the baron Kyr Vard. The fortress of Manavgat, lying at the mouth of the Manavgat River 29 miles north-west of Kalonoras, was in the possession of the lord Mikhail, undoubtedly of Greek origin.³⁵

If the information provided by the coronation list is correct, Lewon's dominions appear not to have extended along the Cilician coast as far west as Manavgat, but also to have reached into inner mountainous Cilicia Tracheia, or Rough Cilicia, along the mountain valleys of the Göksu River basin. Armenian military presence, especially in the form of a network of fortresses close to Konya, the Seljuk capital, must have been little comfort to the Seljuk rulers. Thus Seljuk aggression against the Cilician Armenian kingdom must be accorded to two levels of explanation: the immediate local threat of Lewon I's encroachment on the Seljuk border, as well as his plans to conquer Antioch and the larger regional conflict that it caused between him and his Latin rivals who found natural allies in the Muslim polities of the Ayyubids and Seljuks.

The first Seljuk invasion of Cilicia occurred in 1201 and was successfully repelled by Lewon. Obscure as the details of the campaign remain, the sources inform us that the Seljuk assault was provoked by Bohemund IV of Tripoli following the death of his father Bohemund III of Antioch as a reprisal against Lewon I in his support of the rival candidate Raymond-Rupen in a succession struggle over the throne of Antioch.³⁶ Lewon I soon afterwards, in 1203, took the offensive, and sent troops against the city of Antioch, only to be driven out by the Templar knights.³⁷ Emboldened by Hospitaller support gained in 1204, Lewon I continued battering the Ayyubids in Syria in the following years (1205 and 1206), devastating the Syrian

³² Boase, 'Gazeteer', p. 158; *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 80 with n. 68.

³³ Boase, 'Gazeteer', p. 158.

³⁴ *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 80; Seton Lloyd and D. Storm Rice, *Alanya ('Alā'īyya)* (London, 1958), trans. by Nermin Sinemoğlu (Ankara, 1964; repr. 1989), pp. 1–2; Boase, 'Gazeteer', p. 149.

³⁵ Boase, 'Gazeteer', p. 158 and 172; *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, pp. 79–81.

³⁶ Der Nersessian, 'Kingdom of Cilician Armenia', p. 649.

³⁷ Der Nersessian, 'Kingdom of Cilician Armenia', p. 649; Riley-Smith, 'The Templars and the Teutonic Knights', p. 102.

countryside.³⁸ After Ghiyās al-Dīn Kaykhusraw I (1204–10) secured the Seljuk throne in 1205, he turned to the task of securing Seljuk territories which either had been seized or were threatened by the Cilician Armenian king Lewon I. In 1207 Kaykhusraw I conquered the port of Antalya (Attaleia), a necessary outlet to the Mediterranean for his land-locked realm and the most important port for Mediterranean trade on the southern coast of Anatolia.³⁹ With the possession of this important Mediterranean port, the Seljuk sultan entered into the international power struggle over control of the Mediterranean and the profits from trade passing through it. In 1208–09, the Seljuks joined al-Zahir, the Ayyubid ruler of Aleppo, in another campaign against the Cilician Armenians. The Seljuk sultan Ghiyās al-Dīn Kaykhusraw I broke an eight-year truce with the Armenians and laid siege on the stronghold of Pertous, in the eastern mountains of Cilicia. Although they captured the baron of the fortress, Krikor, a son of Lewon I, they were not able to keep the stronghold, and instead negotiated the release of Lewon's son.⁴⁰ According to the terms of the resulting peace treaty with the Seljuks and the ruler of Aleppo, Lewon agreed to surrender the castle of Baghras to the Templars. Lewon's grand-nephew and heir Raymond-Rupen was also to renounce his claims to Antioch. But the treaty went unendorsed and its terms disregarded.⁴¹ In view of the danger of more potential Seljuk attacks into Cilicia, Lewon I sought the aid of the Hospitallers for the defence of this frontier.⁴² Lewon I intended to create a Hospitaller march in the westernmost region of Cilicia as a barrier against the Turks, even granting the Hospitallers rights over places outside Armenian control.⁴³ In April and August of 1210, the Hospitallers received land which included the former castles of the *sebastos* Henry and his sons — Castellum Novum (Norberd), Camardias, and Silifke — as well as Laranda, 'in

³⁸ Riley-Smith, 'The Templars and the Teutonic Knights', p. 99; Der Nersessian, 'Kingdom of Cilician Armenia', p. 649.

³⁹ Known as Attaleai, Atalia, or Adalia in antiquity and classical times, it was also referred to as Satalia in western medieval sources and Antaliyye or Adaliya in Muslim medieval sources. See Feridun Emecen, s.v. 'Antalya', in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, ed. by Kemal Güran, vol. III (Istanbul, 1991), pp. 232–33. Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, p. 272; Claude Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey: A General Survey of the Material and Spiritual Culture and History, c. 1071–1330* (New York, 1968), p. 115; Bar Hebraeus, *Abū'l-Farac Tarihi*, II, 488.

⁴⁰ Sirapie Der Nersessian, 'The Armenian Chronicle of the Constable Smpad or of the "Royal Historian"', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 13 (1957), 157; Der Nersessian, 'Kingdom of Cilician Armenia', p. 649.

⁴¹ Riley-Smith, 'The Templars and the Teutonic Knights', p. 105.

⁴² The Hospitallers were already established in Cilicia since 1149. See Der Nersessian, 'Kingdom of Cilician Armenia', p. 650.

⁴³ Jonathan S. C. Riley-Smith, *The Knights of St. John in Jerusalem and Cyprus, ca. 1050–1310* (London, 1967), pp. 135 and 156.

exchange for an annual tax and their support of a cavalry unit of four hundred lancers'.⁴⁴ The Hospitaller march established in western Cilicia was administered from Silifke. The gift of the last of these, Laranda, situated about 50 miles north-west of Camardias, was not in Christian, but rather Seljuk hands. By granting lands that he did not actually control, Lewon I in essence was encouraging the Hospitallers in expansionist activities. The rights which they received were extensive, 'including the power to make peace and war with the Muslims and to take all spoils, regardless of whether or not the king was present'.⁴⁵ The Hospitaller march in western Cilicia, however, existed for only approximately another fifteen years, until 1226 when the Knights abandoned their rights to Silifke, following the sweeping Seljuk invasion of 1225 along the east Mediterranean coast. Lewon I likewise granted Cilician fortresses to the Teutonic Knights, such as the fort of Amuda,⁴⁶ as well as neighbouring castles to their master Herman von Salza in 1211–12.⁴⁷

In the years 1213–16, a new development in the struggle over Antioch occurred when the son of Bohemund le Borgne was struck down by the Assassins in Tortosa. It was rumoured that the Hospitallers, allies of Lewon I, instigated the deed. By 1216, Lewon I seemed to have gained the upper hand in the struggle and Raymond-Rupen was crowned Prince of Antioch.⁴⁸ This development coincided with the Seljuk attack on the fortress of Gaban (Kapan or Geben). Smbat the Constable links the two events, telling us in his history that when Lewon I took Antioch, Izz al-Dīn Kaykāvūs I marched against Gaban.⁴⁹ At the time, the stronghold was in the

⁴⁴ Riley-Smith, *Knights of St. John*, p. 156.

⁴⁵ Riley-Smith, *Knights of St. John*, p. 156. The Knights theoretically received *dominium*, that is, feudal lordship and the rights pertaining to it over the estates of Laranda. See Riley-Smith, *Knights of St. John*, p. 452.

⁴⁶ The fortress of Amuda, known also as Hamuda, Adamodana, or Amoudain, was located in a corner of the Cilician Plain on the Gökçe Dağı in clear sight of Anazarba (Ayn Zarba). See Edwards, *Fortifications*, p. 59.

⁴⁷ It is not known when the Teutonic Knights abandoned the fort. The Mamluks took it in the last years of the thirteenth century. See Edwards, *Fortifications*, p. 59; Boase, 'Gazeteer', p. 150; Der Nersessian, 'Kingdom of Cilician Armenia', p. 650.

⁴⁸ Riley-Smith, 'The Templars and the Teutonic Knights', p. 107.

⁴⁹ Through a consultation of the scholarly literature on Cilician Armenia, as well of the Armenian sources (such as the Chronicle of Smbat the Constable), I have concluded that the fortress of Gaban must be that named Janjīn in the chronicle of Ibn Bībī and in the Anonymous *Saljūk-nāmah* (translated into Turkish by Feridun Nafiz Uzluk (Ankara, 1952)). The location of this fortress is known today as the Meryemçil pass, which is not far from a village known as Geben. Gaban, however, is not identical with the separate fortress of Gantchi or Chanchi. The list of the Cilician barons compiled in 1198 by Sempad clearly shows that the latter two were separate forts. All three sites, Gaban, Gantchi, and Chanchi, however, were located in close proximity to one another in the Coxon (Göksun)-Andırın Maraş area. See Edwards, *Fortifications*, p. 9.

possession of the Baron Lewon, a relative of King Lewon I.⁵⁰ The Seljuks defeated the Armenian relief force sent by the Grand Baron Constantine and took prisoner several of the leading Armenian nobles. Yet the Seljuk forces were unable to take Gaban and a year later abandoned the siege after Lewon himself had taken to the field, successfully relieving the castle. Among these prisoners were important figures in the kingdom, such as Constantine, lord of Babaron (Paperon) and Partzapert, Lewon's first cousin, Constantine, the baron of Lambron and son of Hetum, as well as Adam of Baghras and his son Kyr Isaac (Kersak), the lord of Malva (Maghva) and Sik (Sigh).⁵¹ This in itself was a victory for the Seljuks due to the negotiating leverage it gave them. The Armenian prisoners, including Lewon's most trusted man, Adam of Baghras, were ransomed two years later with the surrender of the fortress of Loulon (Lu'lu'a),⁵² Laranda, and Lauzadato as well as a part of the Cilicia Tracheia to the Seljuk sultan.⁵³ Possession of Loulon/Lu'lu'a, a fortress of great importance on the frontiers of Cappadocia near the modern village of Ulukışla, gave the Seljuks control of the approach to the Cilician Gates, securing them a strategic foothold in the region. With the possession of Laranda, an important stop along the trade route to Konya, as well as parts of Cilicia Tracheia, the Seljuks made important steps in pushing forward their frontier with Cilician Armenia. Following the assault on Gaban, Kaykāvūs's forces retook Antalya in January 1216, after the town had temporarily slipped out of Seljuk control when its Christian inhabitants rose up in rebellion and killed the Seljuk officials in the city.⁵⁴ The Seljuks continued eastwards down the coast and attacked the castle of Silifke, which at the time was a Hospitaller possession. The Seljuks, however, were unable to storm the coastal stronghold.⁵⁵

Although Lewon I was required to pay a certain amount of tribute to the Seljuk sultan, there is no proof that he submitted to the sultan as a vassal, a claim put

⁵⁰ S.v. 'Gaban', in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. by H. A. R. Gibb and others, vol. II (Leiden, 1965), p. 970; Edwards, *Fortifications*, p. 125.

⁵¹ *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 92.

⁵² The fortress of Loulon, Lu'lu'a or Lulwa, was originally a Byzantine fort. Merçil identifies the fortress with Ulukışla. According to Boase, its site has never been clearly identified, but was almost certainly on the northern side of the Cilician Gates. If indeed it is identifiable with the Ulukışla site, then it would have been located between the pass and Ereğli. Lewon I had seized it from the Seljuks during the Seljuk succession struggle between Izz al-Dīn Kaykāvūs and his brother Izz al-Dīn Kaykubād, the Seljuk ruler of Tokat in 1212. Yet Laranda must have not been in Seljuk hands for too long before this, for we know that in 1195 the fortress was in the hands of the Hetumid lord Shahinshah. See Erdoğan Merçil, *Müslüman-Türk Devletleri Tarihi*, 3rd edn (Ankara, 1997), p. 137; Boase, 'Gazeteer', p. 158.

⁵³ Edwards, *Fortifications*, pp. 125 and 129; Boase, 'History of the Kingdom', p. 21, and 'Gazeteer', pp. 164 and 171.

⁵⁴ Merçil, *Müslüman-Türk Devletleri Tarihi*, p. 138.

⁵⁵ Edwards, *Fortifications*, p. 224.

forward by Osman Turan and others based on the sole and, as I contend, questionable authority of the Persian narrative of Ibn Bībī.⁵⁶ Paul Bedoukian's numismatic studies on thousands of specimens of coins dated to Lewon's reign demonstrate just the opposite: instead of minting coins indicating submission to the Seljuks, Lewon continued to produce coinage reflecting his expansionist ambitions. Bedoukian pointed out that in addition to his regular series of coins bearing two lions struck in gold, silver trams, and half trams, Lewon also struck coins resembling Crusader dinars in both Armenian and Latin, 'in anticipation of adding Antioch to his kingdom'.⁵⁷

The Seljuk assault on Gaban is briefly recorded by Smbat the Constable as an unsuccessful siege during which various nobles were captured, including Constantine the Constable, Lewon's cousin, and Kyr Sag (Kersag, Kyr Isaac), the lord of Maghfa (Maghva/Malva) and Sik/Sigh.⁵⁸ Ibn Bībī, on the other hand, gives us a quite different version. According to him, the Seljuk campaign in Cilicia resulted in Seljuk conquests of Armenian land. The Sultan, however, agreed to return these lands to Lewon under the conditions of vassalage and an increased tribute. Ibn Bībī portrays the Seljuk sultan according to the Muslim-Iranian stereotype of a just ruler who is primarily motivated by his desire to implement justice. Ibn Bībī explains that Sultan Kaykāwūs moved his court to the fields of Kayseri (Caesarea) in the spring, as was the custom, with all his vassals and commanders gathering before him. At this outdoor meeting, tax collectors from Sis (*muḥassilān-i vujūh-i kharāj-i Sīs*) complained bitterly to the Sultan about the wrongdoings, in particular, the overtaxation, that they suffered from Lewon (*Lifūn Taḥkūr*). The Sultan was so enraged by the *taḥkūr*'s unjust behaviour that he chose to punish him by marching onto his lands. After the heat of the summer passed, the Sultan gathered his many troops and vassals and set out for Sis. When Lewon learned of the approach of the Seljuk army, he took refuge in the Cilician Armenian stronghold of Gaban. The Seljuks began the siege of the fortress and the Armenian king fled Gaban, leaving the fate of the fortress to its lord, Baron Lewon. The Sultan successfully took the fortress and granted amnesty to all residents in the hinterland. After this success, the Sultan then proceeded with his force to the fortress of Kānjīn and seized it as well.⁵⁹ The Seljuk army then met the forces of King Lewon I in battle and successfully routed them. The Armenian king

⁵⁶ Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, pp. 315–16; Merçil, *Müslüman-Türk Devletleri Tarihi*, pp. 137–38; Ali Sevim, *Anadolu'nun Fethi, Selçuklular Dönemi*, 2nd edn (Ankara, 1993), pp. 165–66.

⁵⁷ Paul Z. Bedoukian, 'Medieval Armenian Coins', *Revue des études arméniennes*, 8 (1971), 376. See also Paul Z. Bedoukian, *Coinage of Cilician Armenia* (New York, 1962), and his 'The Single Lion Coronation Coins of Lewon I', *Journal of Armenian Studies*, 2 (1985–86), 97–105.

⁵⁸ *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 92.

⁵⁹ Ibn Bībī, *Al-avāmir al-'alā'iya fi'l-umūr al-'alā'iya*, ed. by A. S. Erzi, facsimile edn (Ankara, 1956), fols 162–65.

once again fled. The Seljuks searched for him but could not locate the King who was apparently hiding out at one of his fortresses in the mountains. After the Sultan and his forces returned to Kayseri, Lewon I appeared again, and begged the Sultan for forgiveness, asking him to grant him back his territory around Sis. Kaykāvūs forgave the Armenian king and agreed to return his lands to him under the condition that he pay a large tribute to him at twice the former rate and fulfil his vassalage obligations such as sending a fully equipped cavalry force of five thousand men whenever ordered to do so.⁶⁰

The complexities of the relations between the various powers in the region are completely absent from Ibn Bībī's narrative, the main Seljuk source for this period. Ibn Bībī constructs the actions of Kaykāvūs as those of the stereotypical sultan punishing the actions of wrongdoers. Lewon I, on the other hand, is portrayed as a weak and untrustworthy vassal. When one looks more closely at the events and contrasts Ibn Bībī's account with information culled from various sources such as Smbat the Constable's Armenian chronicle and Bar Hebraeus's Syriac history, as well as with the numismatic evidence, a different picture emerges. Lewon appears to be a powerful and savvy leader, whose phenomenal rise to power and territorial ambitions rival that of the Seljuk sultans. It becomes clear that Lewon's aspirations to increase the boundaries of his kingdom represented a real threat to the boundaries of the Seljuk state. The Seljuk sultans, on the other hand, only attempted to launch attacks against Cilician territory when they could coordinate their assaults with those of Lewon's other rivals, or when Lewon himself was preoccupied with Antioch and thus vulnerable on his other fronts.

Modern Turkish historiography likewise portrays Seljuk expansion along the borders of Cilician Armenia in a political vacuum. Seljuk assaults on Cilicia are explained as merely punitive responses to Armenian attacks — acts of irrational aggression threatening the flow of trade from the eastern Mediterranean through Anatolia, the primary concern of the Seljuk state. For instance, Osman Turan explains the major Seljuk campaign of 1225–26 against Cilician Armenia in the following terms, in which he not only erroneously implies that Armenian vassalage dates before this campaign, but regards Seljuk policy as a justified and rational response to irrational Armenian provocation:

Since the Seljuk sultans pursued a policy of promoting trade and a great many of their military campaigns were undertaken with this goal in mind, a great sultan such as Ala al-Dīn Kaykubād could not have refrained from responding to the aggression committed, despite their vassalage [to the Seljuks], by the Armenians. In fact, throughout their long history, the intelligent and hard-working Armenian people never displayed much deftness in politics; therefore the Cilician kingdom would recklessly attack

⁶⁰ Ibn Bībī, *Al-avāmīr al-'alā'īya fī'l-umūr al-'alā'īya*, fols 165–72.

Seljuk lands when the littlest opportunity showed itself. It is for this reason that Ala al-Dīn Kaykubād found it necessary to undertake the Armenian campaign.⁶¹

However much the Seljuk policy of expansion into Armenia may have had its own interests separate from the others involved in the conflict, the dynamics of Seljuk penetration into Cilicia was very much dependent upon regional coordination with Christian powers likewise threatened by Lewon I's aggressive political aspirations. Even so, the Seljuks were never able to make permanent gains in Cilicia during the first two decades of the thirteenth century. It was not until 1225–26 during a period of great internal strife in the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia following Lewon's death in 1219 that the Seljuks actually were able to occupy parts of Cilicia and reduce the Armenian king to the status of a vassal. Lewon's death brought dynastic conflict and instability in Cilician Armenia, thus leaving the realm vulnerable to Seljuk attack and conquest.⁶²

The Death of Lewon I and Ala al-Dīn Kaykubād's conquests along the Eastern Mediterranean Coast and in Cilician Armenia

Lewon's death in 1219 precipitated a scramble for the Cilician throne and internecine strife, intrigue, and unprecedented internal troubles in the kingdom, leaving it vulnerable to external assault.⁶³ Within a few months Lewon's appointed regent Adam of Baghras was murdered at the instigation of the Hospitallers. In 1220, Raymond-Rupen of Antioch, with the support of Pope Honorius III, invaded Cilicia in order to claim his previously promised right to the Armenian throne and captured Tarsus. It was at this point that Constantine of Lambron,⁶⁴ the head of the Hetumid family, the long-time rivals of the Rubenids,⁶⁵ took power as regent. In the following

⁶¹ Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, p. 343.

⁶² Ibn Bībī's chronicle is the only Seljuk history that gives any significant amount of information for the period of 1200–43. While the Anonymous *Saljūk-nāmah* provides some limited and, at times, confused information, Aksarāyī's *Musāmarat al-akhbār va Musāyarat al-akhyār* contains virtually no information for the period prior to the Mongol invasion.

⁶³ F. C. Robinson and P. C. Hughes, 'Lampron, Castle of Armenian Cilicia', *Anatolian Studies*, 19 (1969), 187.

⁶⁴ Lambron, or Lampron (Tāmrun in Arabic, Namrun in the nineteenth century; its modern name is Çamlıyayla), one of the most famous castles in Cilician Armenian history, lies on a pedestal of limestone that projects from the southern tip of Bulgar Dağı. See Edwards, *Fortifications*, p. 176.

⁶⁵ Oshin, the founder of the Hetumid dynasty, was a commander (*sebastos*) serving under the Byzantine governor of Tarsus, the Armenian Apllarp. Apllarp granted the fortress of Lambron to Oshin who settled his family and retainers there. The Hetumids traditionally were supporters of the Byzantines and some even adopted the liturgy of the Greek Orthodox Church. See Edwards, *Fortifications*, pp. 4–5.

year, Constantine managed to remove Raymond-Rupen from the political scene and confirmed Lewon's daughter Zabel on the Cilician throne. The real power in Cilicia however was concentrated in the hands of Constantine who ruled as regent. In order to stave off a threat from the Seljuk sultan Kaykubād who was in collusion with Antioch, Constantine allied the Armenian realm with Antioch. He sealed the deal by offering Queen Zabel in marriage to Philip, the son of Bohemund IV of Antioch. Yet once the Seljuk threat receded, Constantine conspired to take control of the Armenian throne by transferring it to the house of Hetum. First, he imprisoned the Armenian queen's husband, Philip, at the fortress of Till-Hamdoun. In an effort to free his son, Bohemund IV turned to the Seljuks for aid and urged the new sultan Kaykubād I to ravage Cilicia. Constantine retaliated by appealing to al-'Azīz of Aleppo, who promptly invaded Antioch. Bohemund found himself in the precarious position of defending his territory and was thus unable to come to his son's aid.⁶⁶ Constantine carried out his plan to make the Queen a widow and poisoned her husband, an event that took place at some point in 1224 or 1225.⁶⁷ After much trouble, in 1226, Constantine finally succeeded in forcing the unwilling Queen to marry his son Hetum.

While Cilician Armenia was in the throes of internal conflict, Ala al-Dīn Kaykubād I (1220–36), the newly installed sultan of the Seljuks following the death of his brother Izz al-Dīn Kaykāvūs I, which also occurred shortly after that of Lewon, initiated a series of aggressive policies in the east and along the shores of the eastern Mediterranean and in Cilicia. Bar Hebraeus attributes Ala al-Dīn Kaykubād's conquests in Cilicia to the instigation of Bohemund IV, who in retaliation for Constantine's imprisonment of his son Philip, called upon the Seljuks to lay waste the Cilician lands and reduce the Armenian regent Constantine to subjection.⁶⁸ First, in 1221, he conquered the coastal fortress of Kalonoros⁶⁹ from its Graeco-Armenian lord by the name of Kīr Fārd⁷⁰ who, after a rather vigorous siege, agreed to hand over the fortress in exchange for the lordship of the city of Akşehir. Ala al-Dīn

⁶⁶ Robinson and Hughes, 'Lampron', p. 187; Boase, 'History of the Kingdom', pp. 19–21; C. Toumanoff, 'Armenia and Georgia', in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. iv.1: *Byzantium and its Neighbors*, ed. by J. M. Hussey (Cambridge, 1966), p. 633; Edwards, *Fortifications*, p. 224; Der Nersessian, 'Kingdom of Cilician Armenia', p. 646.

⁶⁷ Bedoukian gives both dates in different publications. See Bedoukian, *Coinage*, p. 10, and 'Medieval Armenian Coins', p. 385.

⁶⁸ Bar Hebraeus, *Abū'l-Farac Tarihi*, II, 521; M. Canard, s.v. 'Cilicia', in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. by Gibb and others, II, 38; Mary Nickerson Hardwicke, 'The Crusader States, 1192–1243', in *History of the Crusades*, vol. II, ed. by Wolff and Hazard, p. 541.

⁶⁹ Known to the crusaders as Candelore.

⁷⁰ Boase refers to him as Kyr Varte (Boase, 'Gazeteer', pp. 149–50). Although Claude Cahen (*Pre-Ottoman Turkey*) refers to him as Kīr Farīd, his name appears as Kīr Fārd in Ibn Bībī, *Al-avāmīr al-'alā'iya fī'l-umūr al-'alā'iya*, fol. 243.

Kaykubād rebuild Kalonoros, renamed it after himself as ‘Alā’iyya (today Alanya) and transformed it into his main arsenal, a necessary step before embarking on an expansion of the coastal frontier. Sometime in 1221, immediately following the Seljuk conquest of Kalonoros, Kaykubād also seized the fort of Alārā on the coast, a little to the east from Manavgat.⁷¹

Following these conquests, Ala al-Dīn Kaykubād turned to consolidating his power within his realms. In 1223 tension between the Sultan and high-placed Seljuk officials erupted into an open serious conflict and ended with the execution or exile of a large number of men in powerful positions.⁷² With his internal position secure, Ala al-Dīn Kaykubād sent his commanders on an ambitious campaign against Cilicia and the Mediterranean coast. The commanders were the Chashnigir Amīr Mubārīz al-Dīn Chavli and Amīr Komnenos.⁷³ They were ordered to invade Cilician Armenia via the route from Elbistan. Their aim was to strike a blow at the heart of the kingdom by attacking the strongest and best-fortified fortress in the region, Gaban,⁷⁴ the second time after an unsuccessful attempt to storm the very same stronghold in 1216, during the reign of Kaykāvūs I. This fortress was located in north-east Cilicia on the river now called the Tekir Su, a tributary of the Ceyhan. Its ruins lie near a village now known as Geben in the subdistrict of Andırın of the province of Maraş.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, pp. 335–417; Claude Cahen, *La Turquie pré-ottomane* (Istanbul, 1988), p. 74; Osman Turan, ‘Anatolia in the Period of the Seljuks and the Beyliks’, in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. by P. M. Holt, An K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1970), p. 246; F. Taeschner, ‘The Turks and the Byzantine Empire to the End of the Fourteenth Century’, in *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. IV.1, ed. by Hussey, p. 746. Although different sources give different dates for the conquest of Kalonoros, varying between 1221 and 1223, Osman Turan concludes that 1221 is the most likely date.

⁷² Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, pp. 339–42.

⁷³ Amīr Komnenos, also known as Maurozomes, was a descendant of Isaac Comnenus. He is not to be confounded with the father-in-law of Ghiyās al-Dīn Kaykhusraw. See Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, p. 125.

⁷⁴ Friedrich Hild and Hansgerd Hellenkemper, *Kilikien und Isaurien*, vol. 1, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, 5 (Vienna, 1990), p. 287. This fortress is known as Janjīn in Seljuk sources (Ibn Bībī and the Anonymous *Saljūk-nāmah*). Although Gençosman, the Turkish translator of Ibn Bībī transcribes Janjīn as Jinjīn, the name of the fortress in Erzi’s facsimile edition appears to be vowelised Janjīn. See Ibn Bībī, *Anadolu Selçuki Devleti Tarihi: Ibn Bibi’nin Farsça Muhtasar Selçuknamesinden*, ed. and trans. by M. N. Gençosman (Ankara, 1941), pp. 66 and 128; Ibn Bībī, *Al-avāmīr al-‘alā’iyya fī ‘l-umūr al-‘alā’iyya*, fol. 334. It is likewise vowelised Cancīn or Çancīn in the Houtsma edition of Yazıcıoğlu’s text of the fifteenth-century Turkish translation of Ibn Bībī. See Yazıcıoğlu Alī, *Tevārih-i āl-i Selcūk*, in *Recueil de textes relatifs à l’histoire des Seljoucides*, ed. by Th. M. Houtsma, vol. III (Leiden, 1902), p. 359. Based on this evidence and in contrast with Gençosman’s practice, I will render the name of the fortress as Janjīn.

⁷⁵ Alishan identifies the Janjīn with another fortress in the vicinity, namely that of Djandji, but Boase disagrees with this identification. See Boase, ‘Gazeteer’, p. 162. A close scrutiny of

Hidden among the high peaks of the Taurus, this Armenian mountain fortress was an important baronial seat and strategic stronghold for the Rubenid dynastic family. It was here that the kings of Cilician Armenia traditionally kept their treasures and retired in case of danger. Gaban guarded one of the major routes going into Cilicia through the mountains, and control of it was essential in the defence of the Armeno-Cilician kingdom. The importance of Gaban also for the control over the passage of trade can be seen in the agreement made in 1201 between Lewon I and the Genoese which specified that the Genoese were required to pay an extra toll when passing through the region controlled by the lord of Gaban.⁷⁶ After seizing Gaban, Mubārīz al-Dīn Chavli went on further conquering thirty other Armenian fortresses in the region.⁷⁷

While Mubārīz al-Dīn Chavli and Amīr Komnenos were occupied in Cilicia in the region of Maraş, Ala al-Dīn Kaykubād sent his commander and governor of Antalya, the *amīr al-savāhil* Mubārīz al-Dīn Er-Tokush Atabeg along the southern tip of Rough Cilicia, the Mediterranean coast opposite the island of Cyprus.⁷⁸ As a result of this particular campaign, Er-Tokush acquired forty forts,⁷⁹ including Mafgha (Maghva/Malva),⁸⁰ Anamūr, and Andawšc,⁸¹ and routed the Hospitaller knights

both Seljuk and Armenian sources makes it clear that Janjīn is indeed the fortress of Gaban/Geben.

⁷⁶ S.v. 'Gaban', p. 970; Edwards, *Fortifications*, p. 125.

⁷⁷ Ibn Bībī, *Al-avāmīr al-'alā'īya fī 'l-umūr al-'alā'īya*, fols 334–42. Ibn Bībī mentions the Cilician Armenian ruler, whom he calls Lifon, coming to the rescue of the Armenians besieged in the fortress of Gaban. It could be that the Lifon referred here is not Lewon I, the late Armenian king, but rather his namesake and relative, Baron Lewon, who was at the command of the Gaban stronghold when first attacked by the Seljuks, in 1216.

⁷⁸ Mubārīz al-Dīn Er-Tokush, one of Ghiyās al-Dīn Kaykhusraw's most important commanders in the conquest of Antalya in 1207, remained the military governor there until the death of Kaykhusraw in 1211. After the Seljuk reconquest of Antalya, and since the Christian population of the city had temporarily thrown off the Seljuk rule during the succession struggle over the Seljuk throne of 1211, Er-Tokush was once again appointed governor of Antalya and remained so throughout the reign of Izz al-Dīn Kaykāvūs I and the reign of his successor Izz al-Dīn Kaykubād. See Osman Turan, 'Mübarizeddin Er-Tokuş ve vekfıyesi', *Belleten*, 11 (1947), 416–17.

⁷⁹ Ibn Bībī, *Al-avāmīr al-'alā'īya fī 'l-umūr al-'alā'īya*, fol. 343.

⁸⁰ Mafgha (Maghva/Malva) appears as the fortress of the Armenian lord Kyr Sag (Kersak/Kyr Isaac) in Smbat the Constable's list of the Cilician barons of 1198. It is listed separately from Manavgat, and thus cannot be the same fortress, as wrongly assumed by M. C. Şehabettin Tekindağ, 'Alāüddin Keykūbad ve Helefleri Zamanında Selçuklu-Küçük Ermenistan Hudludları', *Tarih Dergisi*, 1.1–2 (1949–50), 31. Mafgha is located in the Piriñsuyu gorge, below the road from Mut to Dağ Pazarı. An inscription in Arabic referring to Alā al-Dīn Kaykubād I, found in the fortress, was dated to the time of the Seljuk conquest of 1225–26. See Boase, 'Gazeteer', pp. 147 and 171.

⁸¹ Andūshanj in Ibn Bībī. This fort is also known as Antchouzedā, Anduseh, and Antioche de Cragus. Ibn Bībī also mentions two other forts that I have been unable to identify: S-k-na and

defending the coastal strongholds in the name of the Armenian king. The campaign sweeping along the coast also extended into the Tauro-Isaurian hinterland. In doing so, it reached the mountain region of Rough Cilicia around Ermenāk and Mut, as we can see from the conquest of the Mafgha fortress, which was located a little to the north from Mut and was at the time in the hands of the Armenian lord Kyr Sag (Kersak/Kyr Isaac), the son of Adam of Baghras. One could posit that after the Seljuk commander and his forces arrived outside of Silifke, they may have made their way up along the Göksu River into the interior of Rough Cilicia past Mut until they arrived at the Mafgha fortress (Maghva/Malva).⁸²

While the Seljuks were ravaging the coast, the Hospitallers' plea for military assistance from the Cypriots was ignored,⁸³ and the Seljuk forces proceeded without opposition down the coast from Antalya eastwards to Silifke. Silifke, however, was not attacked and, for the time being, remained in the possession of the Hospitallers.⁸⁴ When a castle was seized, the Seljuk commander would leave behind one of his men as warden and would then proceed eastwards down the coast onto the next fortress, all the while informing the Seljuk sultan waiting in Kayseri of his successes. Er-Tokush even suggested launching an attack against Cyprus, but the sultan did not permit the campaign.⁸⁵

The Submission of Cilician Armenia and Socio-Political Instability in Seljuk Anatolia during the 1230s

Claude Cahen pointed out that the Seljuk conquests were conducted with little opposition, mainly because of the political situation in Cilicia, which was in turmoil following the death of Lewon I and the machinations of Constantine of Lambron to take complete control of the kingdom by marrying the widowed queen to his son

Nīkīye. See Ibn Bībī, *Al-avāmīr al-'alā'īya fī 'l-umūr al-'alā'īya*, fol. 343. Both forts are absent from the abridged version of the chronicle. See Yazıcıoğlu, *Tevārih-i āl-i Selcūk*, p. 142.

⁸² Ibn Bībī, *Al-avāmīr al-'alā'īya fī 'l-umūr al-'alā'īya*, fol. 343.

⁸³ Boase, 'Gazeteer', pp. 171–72; M. C. Şehabeddin Tekindağ, s.v. 'Silifke', in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. x (Istanbul, 1966), p. 645.

⁸⁴ In the following year (1226), the Hospitallers disposed themselves of this fortress which was proving to be more trouble than it was worth. Not only did they not want trouble with the Seljuks, but they also wanted to avoid getting involved in the internal strife of the Armenian kingdom. It probably did not take much convincing on the part of Constantine, the acting regent of the Armenian kingdom, to sell the fortress to him so that he could take possession of Queen Zabel who had taken refuge at the stronghold under the safety of the Hospitallers in order not to be married to Constantine's son Hetum.

⁸⁵ Turan, 'Mübarizeddin Er-Tokuş', p. 418.

Hetum.⁸⁶ Although assisted by crusader forces, such as the Knights of St John, as well as allied with the Shihāb al-Dīn Atabeg, the ruler of Aleppo, Hetum I, the new King of Armenia (1221–71)⁸⁷ who had just married Lewon's daughter Zabel in 1226, was unable to defend his land from the Seljuk onslaught against his kingdom coming simultaneously from two opposite directions. He was forced to submit to the Seljuk sultan, agreeing to the sultan's terms of vassalage and acknowledging Seljuk suzerainty which included minting coinage in the name of the sultan.⁸⁸ From the years 1228 to 1245, Hetum's coins were bilingual in accordance with the treaty signed with the Seljuk sultan. Thus, through the success of two military campaigns simultaneously waged from opposite ends of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia by his generals in 1225–26, Ala al-Dīn Kaykubād transformed the independent kingdom of Cilician Armenia into a vassal state. The Armenian kingdom under Hetum I of Lambron was no longer a threat to the Seljuks as it had been under the expansionist-minded Lewon I. This new power balance was accompanied by a greatly decreased amount of military action between the two neighbouring states that continued throughout the period. During the otherwise relatively peaceful and prosperous reign of Hetum I, only two Seljuk campaigns in the interior of Cilicia took place in 1233 and 1245, respectively. These incursions did little damage and were used primarily for the purpose of enforcing payment of tribute.⁸⁹

Soon after Ala al-Dīn Kaykubād's conquests in Cilicia, a new threat to the security of the Seljuk realms appeared from the east: the incursions of the Khwarazmshāh and his unruly troops. The Khwarazmshāh Jalāl al-Dīn Mangubertī, driven out of his kingdom in eastern Iran by the Mongols and in constant pursuit by Mongol detachments, first appeared in eastern Anatolia in 1226 desperately searching for a new territory of his own.⁹⁰ In order to confront this new destabilizing element in the region, Ala al-Dīn Kaykubād allied himself with the Ayyūbid ruler al-Ashraf Mūsā

⁸⁶ Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, p. 125. Osman Turan, on the other hand, glosses over the events regarding the internal chaos within the Cilician kingdom in the aftermath of Lewon's death.

⁸⁷ Dates from Bedoukian's list of Cilician Armenian rulers. See Bedoukian, 'Medieval Armenian Coins', p. 367.

⁸⁸ Ibn Bībī, *Al-avāmir al-'alā'iya fi'l-umūr al-'alā'iya*, fol. 341; Bedoukian, *Coinage*, pp. 84 and 228–35.

⁸⁹ Turan, 'Anatolia', p. 247; Canard, 'Cilicia', p. 38; R. E. Darley-Doran, s.v. 'Saldjūkids: VIII. Numismatics 2. In Anatolia', in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. by H. A. R. Gibb and others, vol. x (Leiden, 1975), p. 975; Bedoukian, 'Medieval Armenian Coins', p. 386; Der Nersessian, 'Kingdom of Cilician Armenia', pp. 652 with n. 38.

⁹⁰ For more on the Khwarazmshāh's flight from the Mongols and his wanderings throughout the east, see Nasavī, *Histoire du Sultan Djelāl ed-Din Mankobirdī*, ed. and trans. by O. Houdas (Paris, 1895).

of Damascus.⁹¹ In the meanwhile the Comneni of Trebizond, confident of the Khwarazmshāh's support, revolted against the Seljuks and attacked the ports of Sinop and Samsun on the Black Sea coast. In response, Kaykubād sent his Black Sea fleet and his Erzincan army against them and besieged Trebizond. Although the siege was unsuccessful, the Greeks were forced back into vassalage. Following Jalāl al-Dīn's capture of the eastern town of Akhlat in 1230, Kaykubād and al-Ashraf Mūsā inflicted a decisive victory against the Khwarazmshāh at the battle of Yassıçimen (a plain between Erzincan and Sivas) on August 10, 1230. Unable to recover from the defeat inflicted by the Seljuk-Ayyubid forces, the Khwarazmshāh took refuge in remote mountains where a year later he was killed by a local Kurd unaware of his identity.⁹²

The large influx of tribal Turkish warriors and their families in the east of Anatolia, now without any paramount leader following the death of the Khwarazmshāh, and with probably no other means for livelihood, began ravaging the eastern Anatolian countryside between Ahlat and Erzurum. Various sources give different figures regarding the size of this force, ranging between 10,000 and 16,000 cavalrymen, mainly Kanglı-Kıpçak tribesmen under the leadership of various chiefs. Sultan Kaykubād invited these chiefs and their men to enter his service under the condition that the lawlessness committed by their men be curbed. The Sultan himself foresaw the utility of these seasoned warriors as a defence in the east against the Mongol armies threatening invasion and permitted them to set up camp in the region of Erzurum. Yet when a detachment of Mongols raided the outskirts of Erzurum and caused considerable loss, the Sultan immediately moved these troops to more centrally located regions, granting the provinces of Amasya, Erzincan, Niğde, and Laranda as *iktas* to the Khwarazmian chieftains.⁹³

With the Khwarazmian problem under control, Kaykubād turned to pacifying his easternmost frontiers by removing all local sources of opposition. He put an end to the presence of the Ayyubids in the region, driving them from Akhlat and the environs of Lake Van. He also removed his cousin, the Malik of Erzurum, who had collaborated with the Khwarazmshāh. He then went on to conquer Georgia. A few years later, Kaykubād repelled a massive Ayyubid invasion in the east. Bar Hebraeus relates that in 1234, Kaykubād gathered an enormous force of over 100,000 composed of Franks, Greeks, Armenians, Georgians, and Khwarazmians and marched to Palestine in order to meet the Ayyubids of Egypt and their allies from Syria in battle. The Ayyubid rulers realized they could not possibly defeat such a large force and

⁹¹ P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London, 1986), p. 173.

⁹² Holt, *Age of the Crusades*, p. 173.

⁹³ Nejat Kaymaz, 'Anadolu Selçuklularının İnhitatinde İdare Mekanizmasını Rolü, II', *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 3.4–5 (1965), 27–28; Bar Hebraeus, *Abū'l-Farac Tarihi*, II, 530.

therefore did not even go against them. The Seljuk forces took the castle of Mansur and pillaged the countryside before disbanding.⁹⁴

Security at his eastern border, however, did not guarantee safety against the impending Mongol invasion into Anatolia. By the early 1230s, the Mongols were already raiding in the vicinity of Irak. Thus, in order to secure peace with the Mongols, Kaykubād sent envoys to the Great Khan Ögedei to sign a treaty and thus save his country from the onslaught and depredations of the Mongols, at least temporarily. Furthermore, as a result of reducing many of the eastern powers to vassalage, such as the Georgians and Armenians, Kaykubād had an increasingly greater number of forces ready to mobilize when necessary, such as for his 1234 campaign against the Ayyubids. Bar Hebraeus frequently refers to the multi-ethnic forces fighting for the Seljuk sultan in many of his anti-Ayyubid campaigns throughout the 1230s.⁹⁵

Despite Kaykubād's successful military policy in the east, the Seljuk Empire was far from stable. The countryside was devastated after decades of almost non-stop warfare, which adversely affected agricultural production. Bar Hebraeus records a famine throughout Anatolia in the year 1235.⁹⁶ The sudden influx of large numbers of Turkmen nomads fleeing the Mongol devastation in the east created an overpopulation of pastoralists.⁹⁷ The legacy of the Khwarazmshāh's brief interlude in Anatolia was the added demographic pressure on the already overcrowded plateaus. With the death of the Khwarazmshāh, his hundreds and thousands of followers, principally Turkish pastoralists, found themselves without a leader on these overpopulated grazing grounds. In 1237, with the suspected poisoning and subsequent death of Kaykubād and the ascension of his son Ghiyās al-Dīn Kaykhusraw II, the political order of the Seljuks began to unravel and the realm entered a period of extreme instability.

Most historians attribute this period of instability to the young sultan Kaykhusraw II's poor management of state affairs. More specifically, the political crimes and injustices perpetrated by the Sultan's powerful vizier Sa'd al-Dīn Köpek created a crisis that was to have great repercussions in the social order of the Empire. Claude Cahen noted that the rift between the Seljuk state and the Turkmen element of the rural areas and the frontiers greatly widened during this period. He interpreted the demographic change as leading to a concentration of Turkmen power which could easily turn against the Seljuk state as well as providing an environment ripe for the reception of unorthodox religious leadership: 'the Turkomāns, as the result of the influx of their Turkomān cousins who had been pushed back first by the Khwarazmians, then by the Mongols, received simultaneously reinforcement in numbers and

⁹⁴ Bosworth, s.v. 'Saldjūks', p. 949; Bar Hebraeus, *Abū'l-Farac Tarihi*, I, 533.

⁹⁵ Bar Hebraeus, *Abū'l-Farac Tarihi*, II, 533 and 536.

⁹⁶ Bar Hebraeus, *Abū'l-Farac Tarihi*, II, 535.

⁹⁷ Claude Cahen, s.v. 'Bābā'ī', in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. by H. A. R. Gibb and others, vol. I (Leiden, 1960), p. 843.

the seed of future troubles, in the form of doctrines stemming from Central Asia.⁹⁸ This period coincides with the appearance of the Karamanids as local political actors, as recorded by Şikari.

Ahmet Yaşar Ocak directly links bad management of state affairs on the part of the Sultan and his vizier to the outbreak of nomadic unrest which manifested itself in an uprising known as the Babaî rebellion.⁹⁹ The instability of Seljuk rule in Anatolia, characterized by demographic upheaval, famine, economic hardship, and political instability, culminated in a widespread rebellion that affected a large part of interior Anatolia spanning the years between 1239 and 1241. This three-year religious and political uprising of Turkmen occurred under the leadership of a charismatic religious figure known as Baba Rasûl or Baba Ilyās-i Hurasānī.¹⁰⁰ Baba Ishāk first appeared preaching and amassing followers in Samosata (Samsat) in the region of Kafarsūd near the Syrian border. He began to spread his teachings south of the eastern Taurus and moved westward until he arrived in the region of Amasya in 1231, picking up followers on his way. While in Amasya, Baba raised the standard of revolt in 1239. Manned by restless Turkmen, Baba's army of believers spread the uprising from Amasya throughout the entire region of Elbistan (Maraş), Kahta, Malatya, Adiyaman, and Sivas and successively defied Seljuk armies as they ravaged the countryside.¹⁰¹ It was only with great difficulty that the Seljuk forces were able to suppress the Turkman on the plain of Malatya near Kırşehir.¹⁰²

The Imposition of Mongol Authority over Anatolia and the Change of the Balance of Power in the Region during the 1240s and 1250s

Following the trauma of widespread rural uprisings as manifested in the Babā'î rebellion of 1239–41, the Seljuk sultanate was further thrown into upheaval by the 1243 defeat at Köseadağ, where the Seljuk army was obliterated by Mongol forces under the western commander Bayjū. The Seljuk sultan became tributary to the Mongol Khan, and a gradual process of Mongol intervention in Seljuk internal as well as external affairs began. This development was intensified with the establishment of the Ilkhanid regime in Iran and Anatolia by Hülegü (1256–65) during the Khanate of Möngke (1251–59). In 1256, Hülegü arrived in Iran and extended his

⁹⁸ Cahen, s.v. 'Bābā'î', p. 843.

⁹⁹ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *La révolte de Baba Resul ou la formation de l'hétérodoxie musulmane en Anatolie au XIII^e siècle* (Ankara, 1989), p. 22.

¹⁰⁰ Elvan Çelebi, *Menākıbu'l-kudsıyye fî menāsibi'l-ünsıyye*, ed by Ismail E. Erunsal and A. Yaşar Ocak (İstanbul, 1984). Scholars now refer to him simply as Baba Ishāk.

¹⁰¹ Ocak, *La révolte de Baba Resul*, p. 22; Turan, 'Mübarizeddin Er-Tokuş', pp. 421–22; Cahen, s.v. 'Bābā'î', p. 843.

¹⁰² Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, p. 249.

rule to the Anatolian plateau. With this second 'invasion', Mongol rule was reasserted, and for the first time their presence was truly felt. An enormous amount of Mongol troops moved into the Anatolian plateau and joined Bayjū, the Mongol commander stationed there. With this large influx of fresh troops, Bayjū inflicted a second defeat on the Seljuks near Aksaray. Mongol troops were permanently established on the Anatolian plateau.

With the second Mongol invasion and the imposition of their rule as overlords in Anatolia, various different holders of political power in the region became Mongol vassals who no longer had control over their external political affairs and were equally required to uphold Mongol policies. Thus the Seljuk and Armenian kingdoms were no longer neighbouring states at odds with one another, but two tributary states owing allegiance to their Mongol overlords. We thus see the two polities attempting to accommodate and uphold each other's regional authority in the face of social and political unrest and local rebellion by various elements, both Turkish and Armenian. It was under these circumstances that the Karamanids and their Turkmen followers appeared as vying for political power along the marginal regions of the Seljuk-Cilician frontier, where the Seljuks, Armenians, and Mongols had a hard time exercising control.

Bringing in the Karamanids: Towards a Political History of the Turkmen along the Seljuk-Cilician Frontier

It was during the 1230s, a period of chaos and instability throughout the Seljuk realm, that Nureddīn or Nure Sofī, the father of the Karamanid dynasty's eponymous founder, first appears in Anatolia as a political actor. Yet general accounts of the Seljuk sultanate, including the major source for the period, the Persian history of Ibn Bībī, have little to say about the Karamanids and their phenomenal rise to power along the frontier. It has been suggested that the study of borderlands and frontier regions provides 'an indispensable corrective to historical narratives that accept the territoriality to which all states lay claim'.¹⁰³ According to such views, historians too often regarded the frontier along nationalist frameworks which obscure the complexity of relations of these ethnically and politically fluid regions. 'Encouraged by the modern claims for separate national and communal legacies,' writes Jos Gommans, 'scholars too often imagine the frontier as a fixed dividing line between insiders and outsiders of different religions, cultures, and languages.'¹⁰⁴ In their critique of traditional border studies, Baud and Van Schendel argue for 'a view from the periphery'

¹⁰³ Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel, 'Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands', *Journal of World History*, 8.2 (1997), 211.

¹⁰⁴ Gommans, 'Silent Frontier', p. 3.

in contrast to the usual one-sided view from the center.¹⁰⁵ Thus, in an effort to correct what Baud and Van Schendel describe as ‘the distortions inherent in state-centered traditional histories’,¹⁰⁶ it would be worthwhile considering an alternative pre-modern, peripheral view of the frontier through the examination of the text of Şikari’s *History of the Karamanids*,¹⁰⁷ a sixteenth-century semi-historical Turkish work which narrates the exploits of the Karamanid dynasty (c. 1256–1483).¹⁰⁸

Can we arrive at a better understanding of the frontier through the examination of a sixteenth-century account, ultimately based on oral traditions? Gommans claims that there is value in the study of oral history, considering the fact that most historical sources, especially those written in Sanskrit and Persian, ‘were written at the capitals of the sedentary society and tended to criminalize or even deny the ongoing role played by pastoral nomads’. He optimistically suggests that ‘the nomad existence can still be pieced together, both by reading between the lines of these sources and also by studying the few, mostly oral traditions produced by the so-called marginal groups themselves’.¹⁰⁹ What makes Şikari’s narrative notable is its depiction of the Seljuk-Cilician frontier. Modern scholarship imagines a powerful centre in control of its borders, so much so that the arrival of the Karamanids in the frontier region of the Seljuk ‘state’ is attributed to a conscious Seljuk policy of settling Turkmen along its borders with Cilician Armenia in order to defend Seljuk territory against Armenian aggression. According to the narrative of modern historiography,

¹⁰⁵ Baud and Van Schendel, ‘Toward a Comparative History’, p. 212.

¹⁰⁶ Baud and Van Schendel, ‘Toward a Comparative History’, p. 242.

¹⁰⁷ Şikari’s *History of the Karamanids*, significant for being the only internal work dealing with Karamanid history, has been dismissed as unreliable by historians of Anatolian Turkish and Ottoman history. The work is characterized by an idiosyncratic mix of history and legend, and contains much tendentious, chronologically absurd, and anachronistic material. The circumstances as well as the date of this work’s composition remain unknown, although internal textual evidence suggests that it was produced sometime in the mid-sixteenth century, with much of its contents possibly based upon an earlier source dating from the late fourteenth century. Aside from his pen-name of Şikari, nothing else is known about the author.

¹⁰⁸ The Karamanids were a Turkmen dynasty ruling in south central Anatolia, who considered themselves the legitimate successors of the Anatolian Seljuks and heirs in their territories. Their power base was located in the mountainous highlands lodged between the plains of Konya and the Mediterranean. They controlled various routes linking the eastern Mediterranean coast and the Anatolian plateau across the Taurus Mountains and thus controlled trade coming to and from coastal towns such as Manavgat, Silifke, and Anamur, and extracted revenue from tolls levied on Genoese and Cypriot merchants. At the height of their power in the second half of the fourteenth century, the Karamanids controlled, in addition to their traditional power base in Larenda (Karaman) and the region of İçel, the cities and towns of Konya, Aksaray, Ereğli, Niğde, Nevşehir, Akşehir, Kırşehir, Beyşehir, Seydişehir, as well as much of the region around Antalya.

¹⁰⁹ Gommans, ‘Silent Frontier’, p. 3.

the foundation of the various Turkish principalities, or successor states to the Seljuks, was prefaced by the Seljuk 'settlement' of Turkmen groups along the frontier as a defensive policy. Historians of pre-Ottoman Anatolia have yet to question the well-entrenched notion that the Seljuks had the power to settle and control the movement of wandering groups of Turkmen, especially in the 1220s and 1230s when the political turbulence resulting from the Mongol conquests in Central Asia and Iran set off a wide-scale westward migration of Turkish groups into the Anatolian plateau. Indeed, the notion that the Seljuks settled the Karamanids along their frontier contradicts the common acknowledgment that the Seljuks were unable to control the 'unruly' or 'unwieldy' Turkmen nomads.

For an alternative view of events on the Seljuk-Cilician frontier, let us turn to Şikari's account, which attributes the establishment of the Karamanids along the Seljuk-Cilician frontier c. 1230 to their conquest of Armenian fortresses. Şikari's narrative details the arrival of the Karamanid ancestors to Anatolia, explaining how they, as Oguz Turkish chieftains, had arrived in eastern Anatolia with a large nomadic group. The succession to tribal leadership fell to Nureddin, the father of Karaman, himself the founder of the dynasty, an event which coincided with the abandonment of nomadism for a more settled form of life along the Seljuk-Cilician frontier. This was a symbolic moment marking the beginning of the rise to legitimate power by the Karamanids. As the story goes, a Turkmen chief proposed to Nureddin to capture an Armenian fortress at the foot of the Taurus Mountains, saying, 'Nureddin Bey, we are tired of nomadic life. Why don't we seize the castle of Herakleios (Ereğli) from the infidels and settle there?',¹¹⁰ They marched against the fortress, Şikari relates, and not only did Nureddin and his men succeed in seizing it, but they also captured its lord, a certain Kosun, a fierce warrior whom even the Seljuk sultan had previously not been able to defeat. Kosun became a Muslim, married the daughter of one of the tribal chiefs, and participated in every military venture they waged. The Seljuk sultan soon heard of the exploits of Nureddin and his men, including the capture of the fortress of Sivas from a local lord, who, although obliged to rule in the name of the sultan, had become rebellious and declared his independence. After sending the keys of the fortress to the sultan, a symbolic act recognizing his

¹¹⁰ Şikari, 'Karamân-oğulları Ta'rîhi', Konya, Yusuf Ağa Kütüphanesi, MS no. 562, fol. 5b. Ereğli, the Turkish version of the classical city name Herakleia, an inner Anatolian town established on the north-west skirts of the mountains of the mid-Taurus range on the south-east edge of the Konya Plain, is located on the northern side of the Cilician Gates. Its name, Herakleia, possibly dates back to the Byzantine period, for Emperor Heraclius is said to have restored the town. Ereğli became an important scene of conflict between Seljuks and Armenians. In 1199, Lewon I launched an unsuccessful attack on the cities of Ereğli and Kayseri that were in Seljuk hands. In contrast to Şikari's account, modern Turkish historiography gives the much later date of 1276 for the Karamanid occupation of Ereğli. See Metin Tuncel, s.v. 'Ereğli', in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, ed. by Kemal Güran, vol. XI (Istanbul, 1995), pp. 290–91.

suzerainty, followed by a letter openly declaring his loyalty, Nureddin proceeded to Konya for a meeting with the sultan and his court. The sultan granted him the symbols of the drum and standard, and girded him with a sword, all rituals designed to make Nureddin officially a Seljuk vassal and legitimate bey (local ruler). Şikari relates that, subsequently, when the sultan was confronted with problems at the frontier in the region of Ermenāk, where Armenian fortress lords were harassing Muslims, Nureddin and his men were called in to subdue the infidels on behalf of the sultan. Nureddin and his followers seized the fortresses of Mut and Ermenāk and settled in the vicinity with full rights of possession to their conquests as promised by the sultan.¹¹¹

Like any *origo gentis*, Şikari's tale of the foundation of Karamanid rule in the region is essentially a myth. Nevertheless, as fictional as this narrative may be, Şikari's depiction of the frontier merits attention. We are confronted with a frontier devoid of central control, a no-man's-land dominated by fortresses and those who held them, petty warlords operating in a world of fleeting political and military loyalties and fluid, and often unstable, vassalage relations. Power is played out between fortress lords of various ethnic backgrounds, whose loyalty is demanded and bought by those ruling from the faraway centres. Although fortress lords in the frontier region theoretically ruled in the name of a greater sovereign, whether it be the Seljuk sultan or the Armenian king, in practice they operated independently. The sultan, in Şikari's account, although the power at the centre with large forces at his disposal, is a less than powerful ruler on the frontier. At most, he can only hope to coerce the various fortress holders along the periphery into nominal loyalty. The sultan, at the same time, is obliged to keep the various local rulers from attacking one another, primarily in order to avoid the difficult situation of having to choose between defending one vassal over another. Thus we see in Şikari's account a Seljuk sultan who is unable on his own to subdue fortresses from the Armenians along the frontier. Rather he enlists the dynamic forces of a group of warriors, Nureddin and his Turkmen followers, an element new to the region and eager to seek out a power base. It is a symbiotic relationship, for while Nureddin gains legitimacy as a local ruler from the sultan and thus 'legally' possesses what he is powerful enough to take on his own, the sultan is content with the prospect of a loyal Muslim power, rather than a potentially hostile Christian one, in control of important fortresses along the frontier.

While Seljuk sources remain silent on the initial appearance of Karaman and his followers as a rising military force along the Seljuk-Cilician frontier,¹¹² Smbat the Constable presents a scenario recounting the appearance of the Karamanids which echoes some of the elements found in Şikari's narrative, yet without Şikari's

¹¹¹ Şikari, 'Karamān-oğulları Ta'rīhi', fols 6a–8b.

¹¹² Ibn Bībī refers to Karaman as a migratory charcoal dealer who took to highway robbery in the aftermath of the Mongol invasion of Anatolia. Ibn Bībī, *Al-avāmir al-'alā'īya fī'l-umūr al-'alā'īya*, fol. 687.

ideological concerns of legitimizing Karamanid rule in the name of the Seljuks. According to Smbat, a certain Muslim Turkman going by the name of Karaman, appeared on the frontier with a large gathering of nomads.¹¹³

He took the title of sultan and his power grew to such an extent that the Seljuk sultan Rukn al-Din, out of fear, did not dare to go against him. He tyrannically seized a great number of regions with their fortresses and ravaged the districts of Isaura and of Seleucia, and took many captives. He twice routed and destroyed the troops installed by King Hetum to protect the province.¹¹⁴

Smbat was a general of the Cilician Armenian army under his brother, King Hetum, and was personally engaged in combat with Karaman and his Turkish followers, which makes his narrative an eyewitness account. Smbat tells us that while Karaman was ravaging the region of Rough Cilicia, successfully defeating Armenian troops in the region and even killing a certain Halkam, the lord of the fortress of Maniawn,¹¹⁵ and possibly of Ermenāk and Lamaws, he himself was able to convince certain Muslims who had seized the Christian stronghold of Maniawn, a fortress in the vicinity of Ermenāk in the heart of inner Rough Cilicia, to hand it back over to him. He held the fortress for three years before Karaman appeared and proceeded to lay siege to it for nine months. In regard to relieving the besieged fortress, Constantine, the father of both King Hetum and Smbat, advised his son the King to take proper military preparations before marching against Karaman, declaring that ‘I fear that we are witnessing the appearance of a second Salah al-Din’.¹¹⁶ The immediate Karamanid threat ended only when Karaman died soon afterward of battle wounds.¹¹⁷

As Smbat’s account indicates, Karaman’s depredations occurred within the entire territory of Rough Cilicia, from the northern foot of the Taurus mountain range where Isauria (known today as Belören) lay, to the west of Laranda and to the south of the Çarşamba River, all the way across the inner mountainous highland to the plains of the southern coastal fort of Seleucia (Silifke). Smbat mentioned that Karaman ‘twice routed and destroyed the troops installed by King Hetum to protect the province’, which suggests that it was the duty of King Hetum to protect the region of Rough Cilicia. This detail raises the question of what happened to the province supposedly established in the region by the Seljuks in the aftermath of the major

¹¹³ It is difficult to date exactly Karaman’s rise to power. This episode in Smbat’s chronicle is a backward projection from its otherwise good chronological order, where it appears following the death of Constantine in 1263–64. Most likely these events occurred in the 1250s.

¹¹⁴ *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 109.

¹¹⁵ Maniawn/Mannan is identified by Dédéyan as a fortress in the vicinity of Ermenāk and Lamaws in Rough Cilicia, and is shown by Smbat’s coronation list of 1198 as being held by the same lord as that of Lamaws, Ermenāk, and Anamur (*La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 79 with n. 66).

¹¹⁶ *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 109.

¹¹⁷ *La chronique*, ed. by Dédéyan, p. 110.

campaign of 1225–26 against the Armenians, and which was settled by Turkmen to protect it against Armenian aggression. One likely interpretation is that the Armenian king Hetum, as vassal of the Seljuk sultan, was held responsible by the Seljuk sultan for protecting this region against Turkmen aggression, and thus in this capacity deployed troops against Karaman, the Turkmen chief challenging Seljuk authority in the region.

In light of the accounts presented by Şikari and Smbat, two completely independent sources separated by both language and time, the idea of a strong Seljuk state ruling over Cilician Armenia has to be abandoned. Equally dubious is the notion that the Seljuks settled the Karamanids in the region to fight on behalf of the Seljuk sultan against potential Armenian aggression from across the border. In fact, what we see is Armenian troops fighting against Karaman and his men on behalf of the Seljuk sultan, the overlord of the Armenian king Hetum. It fell upon Hetum, as the local legitimate power in the region as well as Seljuk vassal, and of his brother Smbat, the commander of the Armenian troops, to protect the province against Turkmen aggression, not the other way around.

Conclusion

The history of the ethnically diverse and politically fragmented medieval Anatolia during the thirteenth century needs to be viewed without the blinders of nationalist historiography, which presupposes, as well as necessitates, an artificial world of ethnic homogeneity, one which reflects the realities of the present time more than of the past. What I have tried to demonstrate in this essay is that political alliances and military conflicts during this period were not necessarily determined by ethnicity, and by extension, religious affiliation. Many other factors determined how the political balance between these ethnically diverse and competing rivals was upset and maintained, and those factors need to be analyzed against a complex web of relations and specific events.

It is only through consulting various sources, written from different perspectives, that one can begin to discard presuppositions and basic assumptions that nationalist historiography has forwarded in its attempt to give ethnic groups ‘nationality’ status. For instance, Smbat the Constable’s historical account of the Cilician Armenian kingdom proves to be valuable for the insights that it provides on the early actions of the Turkmen Karamanids in the frontier region of Rough Cilicia. In fact, the information imparted by this work is more congruous with the oral history as later preserved in the sixteenth-century Turkish Karamanid history by Şikari than with Ibn Bībī’s work, the main Seljuk source for this period.

Modern Turkish historiography has ignored the frontier in its conception of the Anatolian Seljuks and has exaggerated the amount of power they wielded. I examined the relations between the Seljuk sultanate and the Cilician Armenian kingdom along the frontier as a counterexample to many of the assumptions put forth by

nationalist historiography. Since the marches on the frontier are characterized by the distance from the centre and the closeness of potential enemies across the frontier line, political authority was often a function of political alliances between regional leaders and/or the existence or lack of mutual cooperation between different 'legitimate' polities against rebellious or autonomous elements arising on that frontier. The frontier can further be characterized as a network of fortresses strategically located on high promontories at the entrance into river valleys, thus controlling passage to and from the narrow strip of land along river banks. These fortresses were held by wardens or barons loyal to their respective ruler, and control of fortresses only vaguely marked the boundaries of the Seljuk-Cilician frontier. The Karamanids emerged as a local power who vied for control of strategic fortresses on the frontier. This development, however, has long been ignored by traditional historiography, which, with its bias towards the so-called legitimate power at the centre, has not examined local developments on the frontier.

What makes Şikari's narrative notable is its depiction of the Seljuk-Cilician frontier. Modern scholarship imagines a powerful centre in control of its borders, so much so that the arrival of the Karamanids on the frontier is interpreted as a result of deliberate Seljuk policies of settling Turkmen on the border with Cilician Armenia. Historians looking at pre-Ottoman Anatolia have yet to question the well-entrenched notion that the Seljuks had the power to control the movement of Turkmen nomads, particularly during the political turmoil of the 1220s and 1230s. Indeed, the notion that the Seljuks settled the Karamanids along their frontier contradicts the widespread acknowledgment of the inability of the Seljuks to control the 'unruly' nomads. Although many aspects of the rise to power of the Karamanids along this frontier remain unknown, the aggressive policies of the Karamanids against both the Mongol-backed Seljuks and Armenian Cilicia illustrate how Seljuk power and control on the frontier was more an illusion than a reality.

Part 2

Frontiers, Ethnicity, and Material Culture

Ethnic and Territorial Boundaries in Late Antique and Early Medieval Persia (Third to Tenth Century)

TOURAJ DARYAEE

In the early third century, an empire was created in Persia that its ideological architects named *Ērānšahr*. It is not clear why Zoroastrian priests and the first Sassanian ruler, Ardaxšīr I, chose this name for the territory under their control, but the Italian scholar Gherardo Gnoli, in a brilliant essay, has delineated the concept in the Sassanian period.¹ There is very little which one can add to his study in terms of the idea of *Ērān*, but what can be discussed is a further elucidation of the issue of ethnicity and the boundary of *Ērānšahr* as defined in the imperial inscriptions of the third and fourth centuries, private inscriptions of the sixth century, Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts of the ninth and tenth centuries, and Persian texts of the eleventh. Given the broad chronological span of these sources, they can be used to examine how the concept of *Ērān* and being *ēr* 'Iranian' changed in Persia between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. This essay will also delineate how the concept of boundary and ethnicity presented itself to different religious communities within the Sassanian Empire. To understand the transformation of the meaning of

¹ Gherardo Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on its Origin* (Rome, 1989). Aman Allah Ghoreyši, *Irān-Nāmak, Negarešī now be Tārīx va nām-e Iran* (Tehran, 1994), has discussed the same issue in a more general manner. In 1994, the second biannual conference of Iranian Studies at Bethesda, Maryland, was dedicated to and entitled 'Iranian Cultural Identity'. Two papers presented in that conference are relevant for my discussion of ethnic and territorial boundaries: E. Yarshater, 'Persian Identity in Historical Perspective', and R. N. Frye, 'Iranian Identity in Ancient Times' (published in *Iranian Studies*, 26.1–2 (1993), 144–45). Frye questioned Gnoli's suggestion that the idea of *Ērān* or a territorial boundary originated in the Sassanian period. He suggests that a concept of ethnicity and territory must have been already in existence during the Achaemenid period.

Ērānšahr and *ēr*, the essay is divided into two parts, dealing with ethnicity and boundary, respectively.

Ethnicity

The Zoroastrian holy book *Avesta*, which was composed in various stages between 1000 and 500 BCE and committed to writing during the Sassanian period, contains the first instance of the ethnic epithet *Arya* (*airiia-*) in the sense of 'noble'. In the *Avesta* we see that the *Arya* were an ethnic group viewing all others as *an-Arya* ('non-Aryan'), an important point for the Sassanian period under discussion, as Sassanians perceived their neighbours, either Romans or Turks, as adversaries in Avestan terms. The Roman territory was equated with the land of the (Avestan) *sairinam dahyunam*/(Middle Persian) *sarmān dehān*/(Greek) *sarames*. According to the *Bundahišn*, 'the country of Sarm is Rome' (*sarm deh ast hrōm*). In the epic and in other Middle Persian texts, *Sarm/Salm* appears as the eldest son of Frēdōn who was given the land of Rome to rule (Pahlavi Texts 25. 5): 'From the offspring of Frēdōn, Salm who (ruled) the country of Rome and Tūr who ruled the country of Turkeštān, they killed Ēraz who was the ruler of Ērān.'² It is the latter region that receives special attention, mainly because of Avestan geographical concerns. The Turanians (*tūiriia-*) were equated with the Turks of the Sassanian period, an association best illustrated by the Persian epic poem *Šāhnāme*, which describes the territorial conflicts between the two groups. Thus the *Arya* appear as perpetually at war with their non-Aryan neighbours. The Achaemenids who built the first Persian Empire (550–330 BCE) referred to themselves as *Arya*. In his inscriptions, Darius I called himself *ariya ciça*, 'of Aryan lineage'. It is this particular ethnic designation that the Sassanians would retain or revive five centuries later.

The Zoroastrian tradition is the background against which the concept of *Ērānšahr* must be examined. In Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts, *arya/ēr* is the name applied to Zoroastrians. That Zoroastrianism made no distinction between religion and ethnicity is shown by a Middle Persian text dealing with apostasy (*Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 40. 1–2): 'Those whose judgment is this, that one should not believe in the Mazdean religion, in (whose) judgment it is said that (one) should leave the Mazdean religion, and repudiate the religion and follow a non-Iranian (*an-ērīh*) faith; then how is it, and what is their sin? The answer is this, that an adult deserves death for leaving the Good Religion, he deserves death for accepting a non-Iranian religion (*dād ī an-ērīh*); (as for) his belonging to a wrong religion, he also (shares) in the sin which they believe in or do in (their) religion, and on account of having the same religion

² *az frazandān ī frēdōn salm kē kišwar ī hrōm ud tūr ka turkeštān pad xwdāyāh dāšt ēraz ērān dahibed būd uš ōzad*

See Touraj Daryaei, 'Šegefī va barjestegī-ye Sīstān', *Iranshenasi*, 8.3 (1996), 536 and 542.

he is equally sinful with them.³ It is important to note that the passage cited above is from a post-Sassanian text written in the ninth century CE, when the Zoroastrian population had been reduced to a subaltern community under Muslim rule.⁴ In the Middle Persian literature, the concept of *ēr* received further elaboration. Both ‘Iranians’ (*ērānagān*⁵) and ‘Iranian-ness’ (*ērīh*) were set in contrast with ‘non-Iranianness’ (*an-ērīh*), while ‘Iranian virtue’ (*ēr-mēnišnīh*) was the opposite of ‘non-Iranian virtue’ (*an-ēr-mēnišnīh*).⁶ Such binary oppositions originated in Zoroastrian texts, and the concept of belonging to or being *ēr* is a Zoroastrian invention. Could non-Zoroastrians have also claimed to be *ēr*? This conceptual distinction is evident in such stock phrases as ‘Iranian man of good religion’ (*mard ī ēr ī hudēn*).⁷ Was it possible to be an ‘Iranian of evil religion’ (**mard ī ēr ī agdēn*)? The answer to this question cannot be found in the Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts, but other texts and inscriptions may help us clarify the issue.

In Middle Persian texts, the word *agdēn* (‘evil religion’) always applies to Islam, not to Christianity. This by no means implies that Christians escaped persecution. In a third-century inscription, the famous Zoroastrian priest Kerdīr boasts of having successfully punished several religious groups, including Christians: ‘And Jews and Buddhists and Hindus and Nazarenes and Christians and Baptists and Manichaeans were smitten in the Empire.’⁸ While Kerdīr’s bias against non-Zoroastrians needs no further emphasis, Middle Persian texts show that the general attitude towards

³ *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, Part I, transcription and translation by M. Jaafari-Dehaghi (Paris, 1998), pp. 168–69: ‘awēšān kē-šān dād ēd kū pad dēn ī māzdēšnān āstawānīh nē abāyēd būd ēn pad dād be gōwīhēd dēn ī māzdēšnān be hilēd dēn abāz stāyēd [ud] bē ō an-ērīh šawēd ēg-iš čē ēwēn u-š wināh čē u-š wināh ī ham-dēnīh [ī] an-ēr abar ōh šawēd ayāb čiyōn bawēd [ud] nakkīrāyīh ī az ēn wināh čiyōn ast ēg-imān rōšnīhā awiš framāyēd guft. Pāsox ēd kū purnāy dēn ī weh be hišt rāy marg-arzān dād ī an-ērīh-iz grift rāy marg-arzān ī-š andar ēstišn pad ān ī abārōn dād wināh-īz ī awēšān pad dād dārēnd [ud] warzēnd ud pad ham-dādīh rāy abāg-išān ham-wināh.’

⁴ Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York, 1997).

⁵ *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, passage 47, in Davoud Monchi-Zadeh, *Die Geschichte Zarēr’s* (Uppsala, 1981), p. 44; Bizhan Ghaybi, *Yādgār ī Zarērān* (Bielefeld, 1999), p. 19.

⁶ Gnoli, *Idea of Iran*, pp. 147–48.

⁷ *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 66. 1. See also R. Schmitt, s.v. ‘Arya’, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. by Ehsan Yarshater (London, 1985), p. 682. It is nonetheless true that the ‘good religion’ is to be understood in this context as Zoroastrianism.

⁸ Michael Back, *Die Sassanidischen Staatsinschriften: Studien zur Orthographie und Phonologie des Mittelpersischen der Inschriften zusammen mit einem etymologischen Index des mittelpersischen Wortgutes und einem Textcorpus der behandelten Inschriften* (Tehran, 1978), p. 414: ‘ud jahūd ud šaman ud brāman ud nāsrā ud kristiyan ud makdag ud zandik andar šahr zad bawēnd.’ For a commentary, see also Philippe Gignoux, *Les quatre inscriptions du mage Kerdīr* (Paris, 1991).

Christians was ambivalent. The term employed for Christians in these texts — *tarsā-gān* ('reverent ones,' but also the 'God-fearing ones') — carries a positive connotation, which may have been applied to Christians by Zoroastrians with less radical views than Kerdīr's. The inscription of Kerdīr distinguishes between native Christians (Middle Persian *nāsrā*, from Syriac *naṣrāyē*) and Roman-Christian prisoners of war (Middle Persian *kristiyyān*, from Syriac *krestyānē*).⁹ During the late fourth and early fifth centuries, a close relation had been established between the Christian church of Persia and the Sassanian state.¹⁰ No less than six metropolitans and more than thirty bishops attended the synod of Seleucia in 410,¹¹ an indication of a quite numerous Christian population of a potentially important political role within the Sassanian Empire. The king may thus have differed in his attitude towards Christians from the leading Zoroastrian priests, especially after the Christian-Persian church had come into existence in the fourth century, with the blessing and under the control of the Sassanian state.

In the eyes of the king, both non-Zoroastrians and Zoroastrians were simply just *mard/zan ī šahr*, 'male/female citizen of the Empire'. Such people would have also been viewed as *ērān šahrīgān*, 'residents of Ērān', in opposition to *an-ērān šahrīgān*, 'non-residents of Ērān' (foreigners). Other legal terms in use included *šāhān šāh bandag*, 'servant of the King of kings';¹² *dehgān ī šāhān šāh*, 'subject of the King of kings';¹³ and, in the late third century Paikuli inscription, *hmky štry GBR[An]*, 'men of the whole realm'.¹⁴ A similar distinction was made for slaves, as a *bandag ī šahr* or 'resident slave'¹⁵ received under Zoroastrian law a treatment different from that of a *bandag ī an-šahrīg* or 'foreign slave'.¹⁶ In short, the imperial concept of citizenship (*ērīh*) and ethnicity was at times at variance with Zoroastrian views.

⁹ It is also noteworthy that the Byzantines are mentioned in some Middle Persian texts as *kilīsāyīg* and their dwelling at *yōnān* 'Greece'.

¹⁰ S. Brock, 'Christians in the Sassanian Empire: A Case of Divided Loyalty', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), pp. 3–4.

¹¹ Brock, 'Christians in the Sassanian Empire', p. 3.

¹² *Hērbedestān* 11. 7, in *The Hērbedestān and Nērangestān*, ed. and trans. by F. M. Kotwal and Ph. G. Kreyenbroek (Paris, 1992), pp. 60–61.

¹³ *Madīyān ī Hazār Dādestān* 20. 9, in *The Book of a Thousand Judgments (A Sasanian Law-Book)*, ed. by A. Perikhanian (Costa Mesa, 1997).

¹⁴ Paikuli 13/5, in *The Sassanian Inscription of Paikuli*, ed. and trans. by P. O. Skjærvø (Wiesbaden, 1983), p. 32.

¹⁵ Depending upon context, the meaning of *bandag* can vary from the strictly legal 'slave' to a less narrowly defined 'servant'. See M. Macuch, 'The Talmudic Expression "Servant of Fire"', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 26 (2002), 125.

¹⁶ M. Shaki, s.v. 'Citizenship', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. by Yarshater, pp. 632–33.

Šābuhr I (240–70 CE), King of *Ērān*, made the first attempt to implement a single, universal religion, and he chose Manī for this political endeavour.¹⁷ Much like Christianity in the fourth century, third-century Manichaeism received official status because of the political advantages it offered. From a strictly royal point of view, it was now possible to have a religion in *Ērānšahr* that was not Zoroastrianism. As W. Hinz has noted, ‘with the exception of Bahrām II, all of the Sassanian kings of the third century were but lukewarm Zoroastrians’.¹⁸ Šābuhr’s support of Manichaeism led to the rise of two competing views of *Ērānšahr* in the third century, one based on the Zoroastrian religion and the other imperial, possibly based on ethnicity (as opposed to religion).

One way to understand the meaning of *ērīh* for non-Zoroastrians is to examine briefly contemporary Jewish attitudes. Both the *Babylonian Talmud* and the evidence from the Dura synagogue indicate that Jews had the ability to and indeed did become part of the Sassanian society and state (*mard ī šahr*). They took Persian names, wore the high Persian hats (*kulāf*), while the leader of the Jewish community (Middle Persian *reš galūt*) was allowed to wear the Persian badge of status and authority, the *kamar* belt.¹⁹ The highly critical views that Palestinian Jews had of the ‘outlandish’ costumes of certain Persian Jews even suggest that some Jews may even have been members of the imperial administration.²⁰ It is therefore quite possible that Jews from the core area of the kingdom — Xūzestān, Fārs, and Media — viewed themselves as part of the Sassanian state and loyal subjects of the king, in short *ēr*. In that sense, it may be worth mentioning that it was only in Sassanian Persia that Jews were recognized as *Arya/ēr* by the state. We should, however, remember that the Jewish community, much like other religious communities in Late Antiquity, viewed others as outsiders. As a consequence, they were treated as a separate entity by the State. Thus, both Jews and Christians were recognized as separate religious communities or *millets*, to use an anachronistic, yet relatively well-known term in use under the Ottomans. Other religious communities, such as the Manichaeans, were never granted that status and, as a consequence, had very different views of ethnicity and *Ērānšahr*.

¹⁷ W. Hinz, ‘Mani and Kardēr’, in *Atti del Convegno internazionale sul tema ‘La Persia nel Medioevo’*, Roma 31 marzo–5 aprile 1970 (Rome, 1971), pp. 498–99.

¹⁸ Hinz, ‘Mani and Kardēr’, p. 493.

¹⁹ J. Neusner, ‘How much Iranian in Jewish Babylonia?’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 95.2 (1975), 187–88.

²⁰ Neusner, ‘How much Iranian’, p. 188.

Boundary

The issue of boundaries in Sassanian Persia is a very confusing one.²¹ This is because the classical sources tend to supply one set of notions about Persian borders that is different from that of other sources. According to Ammianus Marcellinus, Herodian, and Zonaras, Sassanians made all efforts to revive the Achaemenid Empire and restore the old Persian imperial borders.²² Sassanian royal inscriptions have a different view, as they are based on political realities, while the inscription of Kerdīr provides an ethnic view of the boundary. By contrast, Middle Persian, along with some other Persian, texts produce a very different picture of imperial frontiers, imbued as they are with Persian mythical views of the world. We need therefore to clarify such views in order to understand the complexity of boundary issues in late antique Persia.

According to the Avestan hymn to Mithra (*Mihr Yašt* X. 15), the world was divided into seven climes or tracts (Avestan *karšuuar*, Middle Persian *kišwar*): Arəzahī; Savahī; Fradaðafšu; Vidaðfšu; Vouru.barəštī; Vouru.jarəštī; and Xvaniraθa.²³

²¹ There are several texts mentioning the eastern boundaries of *Ērān*. For example, *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr: A Middle Persian Text on Late Antique Geography, Epic, and History*, ed. and trans. by T. Daryaei (Costa Mesa, 2002), pp. 8–9: ‘In the brilliant Balx, the city of Nawāzag was built by Spandyād, the son of Wištāsp. And he set the miraculous Wahrām fire there and struck his lance there and he sent a message to Yabbu Xāgān, Sinjēbīk Xāgān, and Čōl Xāgān and the Great Xāgān and Gohram and Tuzāb and Arzāsp, the king of the Hayōns: “behold my lance, whoever beholds the movement of this lance is like they have rushed to Iran”’ (‘andar baxl ī *bāmīg šahrestān [ī] nawāzag spandyād ī wištāspān pus kard.. u-š warzāwand ātaxš wahrām ānōh nišast u-š nēzag ī xwēš ānōh be zad u-š ō yabbu xāgān ud sinjēbīk xāgān ud čōl xāgān ud wuzurg xā[gā]n ud gōhram ud tuzāb ud arzāsp ī xiyōnān-šāh paygām frēstēd kū ō nēzag ī man be nigerēd har kē pad wazišn ī ēn nēzag nigerēd čē andar ō ērān-šahr dwārēd’). According to this passage, a lance could be used to mark the boundary, while Balx was on the frontier of *Ērān*. Another view of the eastern frontier may be found in the *Wizīdagīhā ī Zādspram*, in *Anthologie de Zādspram*, ed. and trans. by Ph. Gignoux and A. Tafazzoli (Paris, 1993), pp. 58–59. Here Nawāzag is the ‘border of *Ērān* and *Tūrān*’ that ‘was written and manifest on its hoof’ (‘sāmān ī ērān ud tūrān pad nibištāg abar sumb paydāg būd’). According to the Persian Muslim author Bērūnī (*Athār al-Bāghīya*, ed. by J. Homāyī (Tehran, 1998), p. 220), the Aryan archer Āraš once shot an arrow to demarcate the frontier between *Ērān* and *Tūrān*. With the connivance of Spandarmad (or of Ohrmazd, according to the *Frawardīn Yašt*), the arrow struck a walnut tree somewhere between Faragana and Tabaristān. This event was celebrated by Persians as the day of *Tīr rōz* or *Tīragān*. See Zabih Allah Safā, *Hamāse Sarāyī dar Irān: Az qadimtarin ‘ahd-i-tarikhi ta qarn-i chahardahum-i hijri* (Tehran, 1984), p. 568.

²² Herodian, *History* 4.2.2, ed. by C. R. Whittaker (Cambridge, MA, 1969); Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, ed. and trans. by H. B. Foster and E. Cary (Cambridge, MA, 1990), p. 483; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 27.4–6, in *The Later Roman Empire (A.D. 354–378)* trans. by Walter Hamilton (Hammondsworth, 1986).

²³ *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra*, ed. and trans. by Ilya Gershevitch and Karl F. Geldner (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 80–81.

This is in fact the earliest complete list of the seven climes or tracts of the world to be found in the *Avesta*.²⁴ This division must be as old as the time of Zoroaster, for in Yasna 32. 3 he mentions 'the seventh world' (*būmiiā haptai 9ē*).²⁵

A division of the world into seven regions (Sanskrit *dvīpa*) is attested in India as well, which suggests that this conceptual partition is of Indo-Iranian origin.²⁶ According to Sassanian sources, especially *Bundahišn*, the shape of these climes is as such that 'one half [is] in the middle and six parts around' (*'nēm-ē mayān (ud) šaš pārag pērāmōn*). The location of each of these *kišwars* is explained as follows: 'The part in the north-east direction is the clime of Sawah, the part in the south-west direction is the clime of Arzah, two parts are in the south-eastern direction, the climes of Fradadafš and Widadafš, two parts are in the north-western direction, the climes of Wōrūbaršt and Wōrūjaršt, two parts in between Xwanirah'.²⁷ The emphasis is on the central clime. Indeed, (Avestan) *Xvaniraθa*/(Middle Persian) *Xwanirah* was the most important of the seven climes: 'and from these seven climes, all the goodness was created more in Xwanirah'.²⁸ Everything important to both Zoroastrianism and

²⁴ See also *Rašn Yašt* 15–19; *Vendidad* XIX. 39; *Vispered* X. 1.

²⁵ *The Gāthās of Zarathushtra and the Other Old Avestan Texts*, ed. by Helmut Humbach, Josef Elfenbein, and Prods O. Skjærvø, vol. 1 (Heidelberg, 1991), p. 132.

²⁶ Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1989), p. 134. According to Georges Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King* (Chicago, 1973), p. 11, the original Persian world-view corresponded to the Indic five climes of the world. The Indic concept of the terrestrial world was that it was divided into five *dīśah* or *pradīśah* regions, corresponding to the Irish word *cóiced* 'fifth' used to describe 'provinces' in Ireland. Thus according to Dumézil, this must have been the original Indo-European division of the world, and not the division into seven regions, which Dumézil believed to be of Mesopotamian origin, following Willibald Kirfel, *Die Kosmographie der Inder* (Hildesheim, 1920; repr. 1967), pp. 28–30. On the basis of the Gāthic evidence, and assuming a Mesopotamian influence, this could not have taken place but in the second millennium BCE, while by Zoroaster's time this view of the world was already well known and influenced Persian beliefs. It is indeed possible that during Zoroaster's lifetime (c. 1000 BCE) Mesopotamian ideas entered into Central Asia (if that is where Zoroaster lived) and thus influenced Zoroastrian theology, but very little evidence exists for such contacts. As a consequence, and in view of both Indic and Iranian evidence, I am inclined to treat the division of the world into seven parts as an early, Indo-Iranian concept. See also M. Schwartz, 'The Avestan World View', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. II, ed. by Ilya Gershevitch (Cambridge, 1985), p. 643. The sacred numbers in the Indo-Iranian and particularly Zoroastrian tradition were 3 and 7; see A. S. Shahbazi, 'Persepolis and the Avesta', *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, 27 (1994), 86.

²⁷ *Bundahišn*, ed. by Mehrdad Bahār (Tehran, 1990), p. 70: 'pārag-ē pad kust ī xwarāsān sawah kišwar (pārag-ē pad kust ī) xwarwarān arzah kišwar, dō pārag pad kust ī nēmrōz fradadafš ud widadafš kišwar, dō pārag pad kust ī abāxtar wōrūbaršt wōrūjaršt kišwar dō pārag ān ī mayān xwanirah.'

²⁸ *Bundahišn*, ed. by Bahār, p. 70: 'ud az ēn haft kišwar hamāg nēkīh andar xwanirah wēš dād'.

Persian sacred history takes place in this clime: 'Because the Kayānids and the heroes were created in *Xwanirah* and the religion of the Mazda worshipping religion was created in *Xwanirah*, and then it was taken to other climes. Sošyāns will be born in *Xwanirah*, who will make the Evil Spirit powerless and bring about the resurrection and the final body.'²⁹ The ancient kings, the Kayānids, and all other important characters dwelt in this central clime. Mazda-worshipping religion (Zoroastrianism) came about in *Xwanirah*, and Sošyāns, the saviours of the world, will also appear from that clime. According to the *Avesta*, only *Xwanirah* is inhabited by humans. The size of this clime and the number of living beings therein are equal to the other six climes combined. The latter are not only isolated from each other, but also from *Xwanirah*. Water (Lake Vouru.kaša) surrounds the central clime and thus separates it from demons and noxious creatures that exist in the other six climes. In other words, *Xwanirah* is the *oikoumenē*, while half of the world is devoid of humanity and civilization, its only inhabitants being demons.

The Sassanians who established an empire firmly entrenched in Zoroastrian ideas gave special credence to this idea of a world divided into seven parts. As a consequence of political developments of Late Antiquity, Sassanian kings altered the Avestan world-view in order to adapt the mythical view to the geopolitical realities. One of the most important changes introduced to the Avestan world-view in Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts was the migration of humans to the other six climes, which were previously thought of as not inhabited by humans. Thus humans resided now in all the seven climes.³⁰ This change is clearly reflected in an important Zoroastrian text of encyclopedic nature, the *Bundahišn*. According to this text, humans riding the mythical cow Sṛišwag were able to cross the water into the other six climes. Out of fifteen couples born in the primordial times who formed the initial 'tribes' (*sardag*), nine moved to the other climes on Sṛišwag's back. Six tribes were supposed to have remained in *Xwanirah*, but the text lists seven: Arabs, Persians, Māzandarānians, Turanians (Turks), Romans, Dahae, and Indians.³¹

Another important change during this period was the equation of *Xwanirah* with the Sassanian Empire.³² According to the Avestan world-view *Airyanām Vaējō* (Middle Persian *Ērān-wēž*) was located in eastern Persia (Central Asia), by the river known as *Vaḡhvī Dāitiyā* (Middle Persian *Weh Dāitiya*), which is the ancient Oxus River, now Amu Darya.³³ Thus, *Ērān* was part of the *Xwanirah* but in time it began

²⁹ *Bundahišn*, ed. by Bahār, p. 70: 'čē kayān ud wīrān andar xwanirah dād ud dēn ī weh māzdēsnañ pad xwanirah dād ud pas ō abārīg kišwar burd sošyāns andar xwanirah zāyēd kē gannāg mēnōg a-gār kunēd ud rist-āxēz tan ī pasēn kunēd.'

³⁰ *Bundahišn*, ed. by Bahār, p. 71. According to *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 15. 10, ed. by A. Taffazoli (Tehran, 1986), p. 31, the primary source of food in the six tracts is milk.

³¹ Mehrdad Bahār, *Pajūhešī dar Asāfīrī-ye Irān* (Tehran, 1984), p. 179.

³² Gnoli, *Idea of Iran*, p. 175.

³³ *Gāthās of Zarathushtra*, ed. by Humbach, Elfenbein, and Skjærvø, p. 33.

to grow larger. This change was brought about by the ideology of the Sassanian kings, who saw *Ērānšahr* as a territory where Persians lived. *Ērānšahr* was not a part of the Avestan mythical world, but a precise region inhabited by Persians and ruled by them ever since the Achaemenid period. In his trilingual inscription at Ka'be-ye Zardošt, King Šābuhr I (240–70 CE) describes the frontiers of *Ērān* in the following manner: 'I am the ruler of *Ērān-šahr* and hold these *šahrs*: Persia, Parthia, Xuzistān, Mēšān, Assyria, Adiabene, Arabia, Āzerbaījan, Armenia, Geogris, Segan, Albania, Balaskan, up to the Caucasus Mountains and the Gates of Albania, and all of the mountain chain of Pareshwar, Media, Gurgan, Merv, Herāt and all of Abaršahr, Kermān, Sīstan, Tūrān, Makrān, Paradene, India, Kušānšahr up to Peshawar and up to Kašgar, Sogdiana and to the mountains of Taškent, and on the other side of the sea, Oman.'³⁴ The frontiers of *Ērānšahr* are thus defined in terms of the third-century imperial ideology of the early Sassanians. For a good comparison, we learn about territories considered to be *Ērān* and *an-Ērān*, respectively, from the inscription of the Zoroastrian priest Kerdīr: 'Persis, Parthia, Xūzestān, Babylonia, Mesene, Adiabene, Atropatene, Isfāhān, Rāy, Kermān, Sagastān, Gurgān up to Pešāwar.'³⁵ To Kerdīr, the concept of *Ēran/Ērānšahr* is tied to the Zoroastrian religion and most important to him was the distinction between *Ērān* and *an-Ērān*. The frontier separating the two was that of Zoroastrianism. By comparing the ethnic and imperial definitions of the imperial frontiers, it becomes clear that the Empire of the Sassanian kings who proclaimed themselves 'Kings of Kings of *Ērān* and *non-Ērān*' (*šāh ērān ud anērān*) was a much broader concept.

During the late Sassanian period (sixth to seventh centuries) another view made its appearance, which was different from the views of *Avesta*, the *Bundahišn*, and the third-century inscriptions. *Ērānšahr*, or the area inhabited by the Persians, was now identified with the whole of *Xwanirah*, the central clime where humans initially lived. Inhabitants of *Xwanirah* were now seen as migrants into the other, previously uninhabited climes of the *Avesta*. This innovative view was not solely the result of Zoroastrian activism, but also of imperial propaganda (no doubt supported by Zoroastrian priests). The tribes living in the *Xwanirah* according to the *Bundahišn* were now placed in each of the six climes, with the exception of the Mazandarānians and the Dahae and the corresponding addition of Egypt and Syria as the sixth clime. This was naturally the list of the people the Sassanians knew and with whom they were in contact, but who were now assigned places in the Avestan world divided into seven parts.

³⁴ Back, *Die Sassanidischen Staatsinschriften*, pp. 285–88; Philip Huyse, *Die dreisprachige Inschrift Šābuhrs I. an der Ka'ba-i Zardūst*, vol. 1 (London, 1999), pp. 22–23. An identical list appears in Naqš-e Rostam; see Richard Nelson Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (Munich, 1984), p. 371.

³⁵ Gignoux, *Les quatre inscriptions*, p. 71: 'Pārs ud pārt ud xūzestān ud āsūrestān ud mēšān ud Nōdšīragān ud dūrbādagān ud spahān ud rāy ud kermān ud sagastān ud gūrgān tā frāz ō pešwar'; Back, *Die Sassanidischen Staatsinschriften*, pp. 421–22.

At this time *Ērān*, also known as *Ērānšahr*, 'the Domain of the Iranians,' gained an amazing boundary, which had little to do with both *Avesta* and the political realities of the Sassanian period. This is evident when examining a work of geography in Middle Persian, the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* (The Provincial Capitals of *Ērānšahr*).³⁶ This work provides an unusual perspective on Persian views of the world, in which *Ērān* is allotted a remarkably large territory, in fact the whole of *Xwanirah*. It is interesting to note that the cities mentioned in this text do not represent all the regions where Persians held sway and, moreover, this is not the administrative set-up of the Sassanian Empire.³⁷

The *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* divides the Sassanian Empire into four *kusts* or regions: the north-east (*kust ī xwarāsān*), the south-west (*kust ī xwarbarān*), the south-east (*kust ī nēmrōz*), and the north-west (*kust ī ādūrbādagān*).³⁸ The south-western region includes such territories as Africa (*frīgā*) and such cities as Mecca (*mekkā*) and Medina (*madīnag*). How were these added to the Sassanian notion of *Ērān/Ērānšahr*? Simply put, the division into four regions originated in the administrative reforms implemented by Kawād I and his son Xusrō I in the 500s, but only accomplished during the reign of Xusrō II (590–628), when imperial ambitions drove the Persian armies to Africa and under the walls of Constantinople. In Arabia, while Oman had been intermittently under Persian control during the third century, Persian forces invaded Yemen during Xusrō I's reign (575). Arabic sources also attest to the fact that during the 500s the Persians were in Mecca and they were probably also involved in Medina. According to *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, both cities of eastern Arabia were in *Ērān/Ērānšahr*.³⁹ As for Africa, it is well known that Xusrō II's forces invaded and occupied Egypt between 619 and 628. There are also reports that Persian forces, following the occupation of Egypt, made incursions westward into Libya and southward into Ethiopia.⁴⁰ Though short-lived, this far out venture of Xusrō II's

³⁶ *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, ed. and trans. by Daryae.

³⁷ R. Gyselen, 'Les données de géographie administrative dans le *Šahrestānīhā-ī Ērān*', *Studia Iranica*, 17 (1988), 206.

³⁸ The regions of *Ērān* are listed in diagonal order, a manner reminiscent of King Darius's gold and silver tablets from Persepolis. In the tablets, the Achaemenid Empire is said to stretch 'from the land of the Sakas to Ethiopia and from India to Sardis' and this may be an element of the oral tradition lasting from the Achaemenids to the last Sassanian kings. See Touraj Daryae, 'Čand nokte darbare-ye matn pahlavi-ye šahrestanha-ye iranšahr', *Iranshenasi*, 12.4 (2001), 797–98. For similarities between Achaemenid and Sassanian inscriptions, see O. P. Skjærvø, 'Thematic and Linguistic Parallels in the Achaemenian and Sassanian Inscriptions', in *Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce*, vol. II (Leiden, 1985), pp. 593–603; Philip Huyse, 'Noch einmal zu Parallelen zwischen Achaemeniden und Sāsānideninschriften', *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, 23 (1990), 173–83.

³⁹ M. J. Kister, 'Al-Ḥīra, Some Notes on its Relations with Arabia', *Arabica*, 11.2 (1968), 145–46.

⁴⁰ R. Altheim-Stiehl, 'The Sassanians in Egypt – Some Evidence of Historical Interest', *Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie Copte*, 31 (1992), 92.

forces remained in Persian memory for a relatively long time. Tabarī reports that Xusrō's horsemen reached as far as Africa (Arabic *Ifriqiyah*),⁴¹ which most likely refers to North Africa. Persian involvement in Ethiopia is mentioned in a medieval Persian epic, the *Kūšnāme* (Book of Kūš).⁴² In this text the hero born from the union of a Persian man and an African woman is sent on behalf of the *Ērānians* to conquer the Ethiopians. He does so bravely, but lately decides to switch sides, and another battle is fought in the kingdom of Kūš. I believe this medieval Persian epic encapsulates the late Sassanian encounter between Persians and Ethiopians, however much the episode was embellished in epic fashion. One last piece of evidence comes from the Georgian chronicle, the eighth- or ninth-century *History of King Vaxt'ang Grogali*. The chronicle reports that the Georgian hero *Vaxt'ang* accompanied the Persian king to the land of *Abašet'i*. The locale is described as follows: 'a land which was surrounded by water and reeds, in which neither ships nor even quadrupeds could move. It is on the borders of Persia.'⁴³ This evidence suggests not only a fascination with Ethiopia, but also some kind of historical connection between the two peoples which is reminiscent of Herodotus's account of Cambyses's plan of invading Ethiopia.

If these historical accounts are indeed the point of reference for the geographical outlook of the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, then during the late Sassanian period an image of the world must have developed among Persians, which was ultimately derived from imperial policies of the sixth and early seventh centuries. This was a period of reinvigoration of the Empire during which Sassanian Persia reached its largest limits and exerted influence far beyond its political borders. *Ērān/Ērānšahr* had now expanded and reflected a new Sassanian imperial image of the world. When Xusrō I took the title of 'Lord of the Seven Climes' (*haft kišwar xwadāy*)⁴⁴ this concept harkened back to the Avestan ideas as reflected in *Kayān* or *Zamyād Yašt*, in which the Kayānīd kings are not only endowed the (Avestan) 'Kavīyan Glory' (*kauuaēm x'arəno*),⁴⁵ but also known as those 'who ruled over the seven climes of earth' (*yat xsaiiata paiiti būmīm haptai 9iām*). What had changed, however, was that

⁴¹ Tabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, trans. by Clifford Edmund Bosworth, vol. v (New York, 1999), p. 376.

⁴² *Kūšnāme*, ed. by Jalal Matīnī (Tehran, 1998).

⁴³ *Rewriting Caucasian History: The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles*, trans. by Robert W. Thomson (Oxford 1996), pp. 210–11. The Armenian version has 'Habašet', to the land of the K'uš'. It is interesting to note that the Armenian version of this text maintains that the Kušāns were descendants of the 1,000 prisoners taken from 'the land of the K'uš' and deported to Persia. See *Rewriting Caucasian History*, trans. by Thomson p. 212.

⁴⁴ Davoud Monchi-Zadeh, 'Xosrov ut Retak', in *Monumentum Georg Morgenstierne*, vol. II (Leiden, 1982), p. 63.

⁴⁵ For the concept of 'glory' (*xwarrah*) as used on coins of the late Sassanian rulers, see Touraj Daryaei, 'The Coinage of Xusrō II: Propaganda', *Journal of the American Numismatic Society*, 7 (1997), 41–54.

while holding to this title, non-Ērānians had been pushed onto the other six climes and *Xwanirah* had been equated with *Ērān/Ērānšahr*.⁴⁶

To return now to ethnicity and its association to boundaries, it is also evident that non-Zoroastrian Persians identified with *Ērānšahr*. A good example of such views is the inscription on a coffin found in Constantinople. The coffin was that of a Christian Persian named Xordād, the son of Hormizd-Āfrīd, who had travelled to Byzantium probably in the 800s,⁴⁷ long after the Arabs had conquered the Sassanian Empire and replaced the rule of the Sassanian king with that of the Caliph. Hormizd-Āfrīd's homeland was now within the eastern part of what Arab Muslims called 'the house of Islam' (*dar al-Islam*). Nevertheless, the inscription mentions Hormizd-Āfrīd's son as being 'from the dwelling of *Ērānšahr*, from the district of Čālagān, from the village of Xīšt' ('az mān ī ērānšahr, az rōstā (ī) čālagān, az deh (ī) xīšt'). Quite literally, this inscription thus suggests that in the absence of the Sassanian Empire, *Ērān/Ērānšahr* had lost its religious significance for non-Zoroastrians. *Ērānšahr* could therefore be called homeland by a Christian Persian. In my opinion, this semantic transfer was a consequence of the recognition of the Christian Persian church in the fifth century. After c. 400, regardless of their religion, all Persians had constructed a set boundary in their minds, which coincided with the frontiers of *Ērānšahr*, although its extent may have been defined in various ways by various religious communities. The territory referred to as *Ērān/Ērānšahr* in the funerary inscription of Xordād may well be the third- to seventh-century Empire extending from the Amu Darya to the Euphrates. To Zoroastrian priests of the early Sassanian period, it included only the lands mentioned in Kerdīr's third-century inscription. Imperial frontiers, however, had considerably expanded, and the idea of a much larger *Ērān/Ērānšahr* survived well into the Islamic period. According to the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, *Ērān/Ērānšahr* extended from Central Asia to Africa. This view was to become part of the Persian literary tradition. The *Preface to the Šāhnāme of Abū Mansūrī* defines *Ērānšahr* as 'from the Amū Daryā (Oxus) river to Misr (Nile) river and these other regions are around it, and from these seven regions, *Ērānšahr* is more magnanimous in every part'.⁴⁸

Thus the mythical division of the world into seven climes was eventually introduced into political reality as represented on the maps of the early Islamic period,

⁴⁶ One can also suspect that *Xwanirah* is the land of settled dwellers and equated with the civilized clime, in which case *Ērān* is the only civilized region.

⁴⁷ F. de Blois, 'The Middle-Persian Inscription from Constantinople: Sassanian or Post-Sassanian?', *Studia Iranica*, 19 (1990), 209–18.

⁴⁸ Muhammad Qazvīnī, 'Moghadame-ye šāhnāme-ye ghadīm', in his *Bīst maghāle-ye Ghazvīnī*, ed. by Abbas Ighbāl, vol. II (Tehran, 1984), p. 49. In editing the text, Davoud Monchi-Zadeh corrected this passage in accordance with the traditional boundaries of the Sassanian Empire and thus replaced the Nile with *forāt* 'Euphrates'. See Davoud Monchi-Zadeh, *Topographisch-historische Studien zum iranischen Nationalepos* (Wiesbaden, 1975), p. 8. In my opinion, this is simply a violation of the original text.

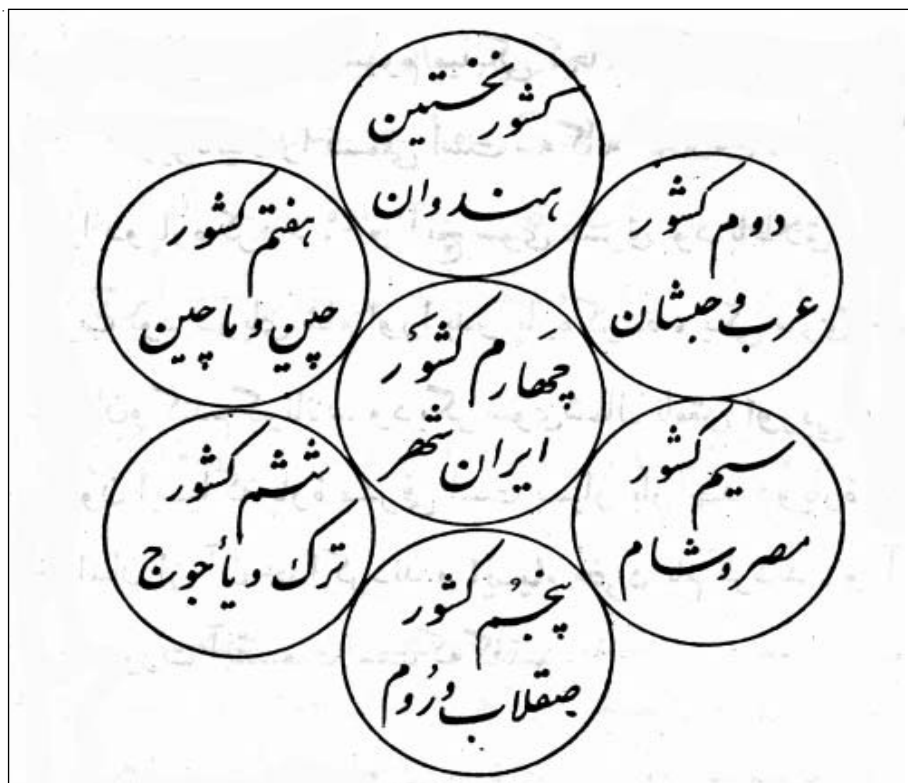


Figure 1. The World according to the *Šāhnāme-ye Abū Mansūrī*.

such as that of Bērūnī matching the description in the *Preface to the Šāhnāme of Abū Mansūrī* (Fig. 1). Bērūnī explicitly linked his representation to the Persian image of the world.⁴⁹ This inverted map is a somewhat modified version of the Avestan division of the world: instead of one clime for each direction of the compass, Bērūnī placed two climes to the east and another two to the west, with just one clime for north and south, respectively. Nevertheless, *Ērān/Ērānšahr* stretches from Egypt to the land of the Turks (Central Asia), much like in the descriptions of the *Preface to the Šāhnāme of Abū Mansūrī* and in the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*. The contemporary geopolitical situation was naturally much different from the situation described on this map, but the scribe had to follow the ancient Persian image of the world, in which *Ērānšahr* was at the centre with all other lands surrounding it. Moreover, more accurate maps of the world known to the Persian Muslims still represent *Ērānšahr* in the middle, albeit under the modified name of ‘cities of Persia’ (*šahrhā-ye bārs*) (Fig. 2).

⁴⁹ Muhammad ibn Ahmad Bērūnī, *Āthār al-Bāghīyā*, ed. by Akbar Danasirisht (Tehran, 1984), p. 196.

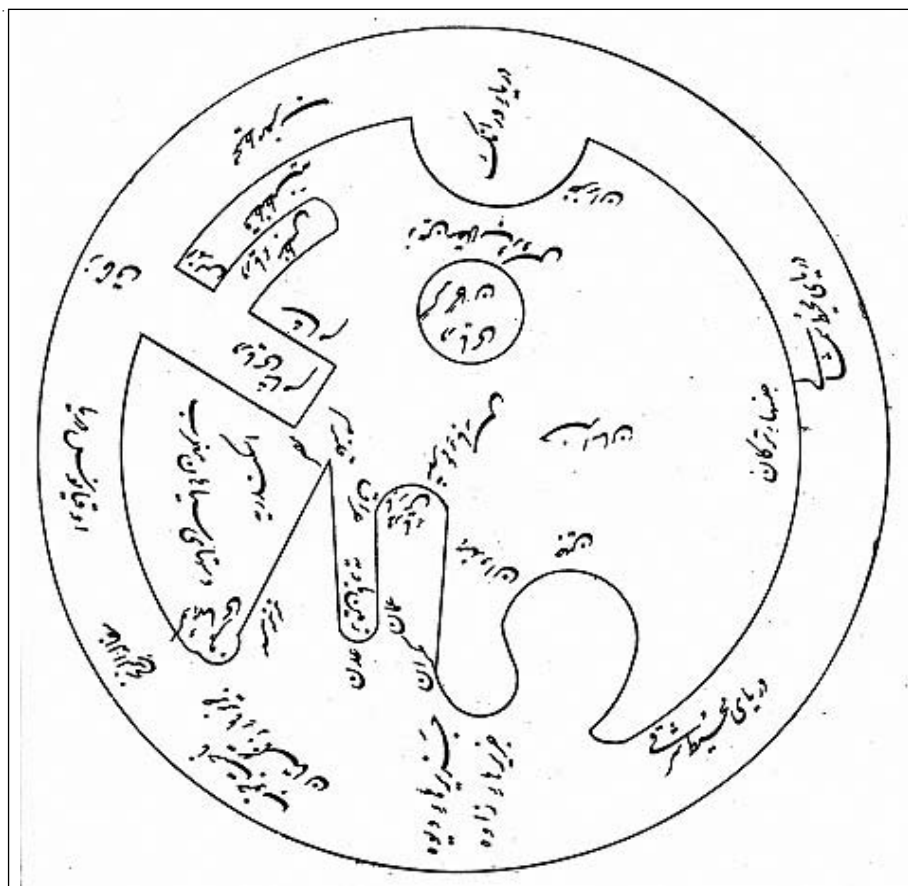


Figure 2. The World according to the Persian Scholar Bērūnī.

Conclusion

While the concept of *Ērān* and Iranian-ness (*ēr*) had its roots in Zoroastrianism, imperial and religious views began to diverge already in the third century.⁵⁰ During

⁵⁰ This is most evidently shown by means of comparing the inscription of Šābuhr I with that of Kerdīr. Besides provinces mentioned in the latter, the former includes the following: Arabia (*'rbystn-y*), Armenia (*'rmn-y*), Iberia (*wyršn*), Machelonia (*sykn*), Albania (*'rd'n*), Balāsagān (*bl'skn*), Alānān (*'l'nn*), Tabarestān and Gēlān (*pryšhwr*), Hyrknia (*wrkn*), Margnia (*mrgw*), Harē/Areia (*hryw*), Abršahr (*'prhštr*), Tūrān (*twrgn*), Makūrān (*mkwrn*), Paradene (*p'rtin*), Hindustān (*hndstin*), Kūšānšahr (*kwšnhštr*), Pešawar (*'L pškbwr*), Kāšgar (*'L k'š*),

most of the Sassanian period, an *ēr* was not necessarily or exclusively a Zoroastrian Persian, as shown by the inscription of a Christian Persian from Constantinople. This was certainly agreeable to Sassanian monarchs whose imperial ambitions were often restricted by Zoroastrian religious exclusions. Manichaeans, however, did not hold to the idea of *ēr*. It is possible that, since both Christian and Jewish communities were recognized by king and state, Manichaeans did initially identify with *Ērānšahr*. The Jewish community was recognized in the third century, the Christian one in the fifth. By contrast, Manichaeans were persecuted and driven out of the Empire. This may well explain why Manichaeans, along with Arabs, Chinese, and Romans referred to the Sassanian territory as Fars, Persis, or Persia,⁵¹ but not *Ērānšahr*. Since they had been excluded from *Ērān* and denied Iranian-ness, they could not accept the Sassanian definition of imperial boundaries. This in turn suggests that during Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, different religious communities had different notions of ethnicity in relation to *ēr* and the frontiers of *Ērānšahr*. While various religious communities (particularly the Jews) defined themselves in opposition to and separate from others, it was the Sassanian state that granted those willing to serve the family of Sāsān and support the Empire the status of citizens, *Ērānagān* and *mard/zan ī šahr*. Those who either challenged the Sassanian rule or were not accepted by the state, such as the Manichaeans, were not only persecuted and driven out of the Empire, but also denied the status of citizens. They, in turn, refused to view themselves as citizens of *Ērānšahr* and to recognize the Empire of *Ērānšahr*.

There is much continuity in the history of the world representation in ancient and medieval Persia. However, it is with the coming of the Sassanians and their establishment of *Ērān/Ērānšahr* as imperial territory that the Persian image of the world was drastically altered. While rooted in the Younger *Avesta*, the concept of *Ērān/Ērānšahr* was remodelled to accommodate the new ideological needs of the imperial propaganda. This is particularly evident in the new meaning attached to the central region *Xwanirah*, initially the only one of seven climes to be inhabited by humans. Now *Ērān/Ērānšahr* was squarely placed in *Xwanirah* and given the river *Vaḥvī Dāitiyā* (Amu Darya) as northern frontier. Further changes were introduced during the early Sassanian period to this geographic concept. First, Persians and a host of other peoples were placed in *Xwanirah*, while others were ‘pushed out’ into the previously uninhabited six climes. Later, most likely during the late Sassanian period, *Ērān/Ērānšahr* was eventually identified with the whole of *Xwanirah*. As a consequence, other peoples allowed to live in *Xwanirah* during the early Sassanian period were now pushed out into the other Avestan climes. The Sassanians thus manipulated Avestan geographical views to make *Ērān/Ērānšahr*, the Empire, not just the privileged area of the world, much like the Achaemenids had done before

Sogdiana (*swgd*), Taškent (*š’štn*), and Oman (*mzwnhštr*). See Back, *Die Sassanidischen Staatsinschriften*, pp. 286–88.

⁵¹ Gnoli, *Idea of Iran*, pp. 152 and 156.

them, but also the central clime. Such changes are most evident on maps produced by early Islamic geographers and writers who saw *Ērān/Ērānšahr* as the central clime surrounded by the other six regions of the world. In reality, this was a late Sassanian innovation that not only transposed successfully the Avestan *Airyanəm Vaējō* onto the Empire, but also included territories recently conquered by imperial armies, all of which were now redefined as *Xwanirah*.

Acculturation and Ethnogenesis along the Frontier: Rome and the Ancient Germans in an Archaeological Perspective

SEBASTIAN BRATHER

Fifteen years ago, against the grain of common views opposing Romans to ancient Germans, Patrick Geary boldly affirmed that ‘the Germanic world was perhaps the greatest and most enduring creation of Roman political and military genius’.¹ The current historical and archaeological research indeed insists on the close interactions between Rome and the northern barbarians. Processes of acculturation and ethnogenesis took place, sometimes concomitantly, and influenced both sides. From their inception, such contacts induced a variety of changes, and the multitude of interactions taking place make it difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint a clear-cut historical moment for the onset of exchange between the two apparently different worlds.² In this essay, the barbarian perspective will be given special emphasis grounded in the archaeological evidence.

First Contacts since Caesar

Caesar first produced a narrower definition of the ancient Germans. The term *Germani* had probably been known before him, but the dichotomy between Germans and Celts is apparently the product of the political thought of this influential Roman politician and commander. He, and no one else, established the Rhine as a frontier

¹ Patrick Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (Oxford, 1988), p. vi.

² Ulrich Gotter, “‘Akkulturation’ als Methodenproblem der historischen Wissenschaften”, in *Wir, ihr, sie: Identität und Alterität in Theorie und Methode*, ed. by Wolfgang Eßbach (Würzburg, 2000), pp. 373–406, here p. 387.

separating those two barbarian peoples. Before Caesar, Greek and Roman authors had known only Celts and Scythians as barbarians of north-western and north-eastern Europe, respectively. Slowly and gradually, they eventually became aware of the existence of other, different groups in the middle, to which they referred accordingly as Celto-Scythians. But Caesar's political goals in Gaul required a more substantial and distinctive frontier. All of Caesar's descriptions of *Germani cisrhenani* and Celtic groups living beyond the river Rhine show that there was in fact no sharp contrast between these barbarians. True, the ancient Germans were viewed as more 'savage' than the Celts, but this was only because of the long and enduring Roman influence in southern Gaul, closer to the Celtic lands. In theory, however, both groups were no more than uncivilized barbarians, especially when in contrast with Romans. Moreover, none of them was in fact homogeneous. Both Celts and Germans consisted of many groups for which a great number of names were in use. Caesar's own division of the Celts into three main groups, the *Aquitani*, the *Belgi*, and the 'true' *Celti* (or *Galli*), is in fact an attempt to bring order into a chaotic, barbarian world, as clearly indicated by his choice of names beginning with the first three letters of the Latin (or Greek) alphabet. In short, such classifications followed geographical, not cultural, criteria.

However, by the mid-first century BC, direct contacts between Romans and Germans had been established. The Rhine was now the frontier separating Roman provinces from the barbarian *Germania magna*. During the first and second centuries, parts of what is now south-west Germany, up to the Danube River, turned into imperial territory and were given a girdle of fortifications (ditches, ramparts, and walls, as well as towers). Of interest are the names of the new provinces, as *Germania* (subdivided after AD 90 into *Germania superior* and *inferior*, respectively) was on the left bank of the Rhine, while according to Roman views, the German settlements were to the east, on the right bank of the river. This remark is meant to emphasize the primarily geographic perspective of Roman observers.

The *Batavi* settled somewhere in the delta of the Rhine are a good and early example of Roman influence on Germanic ethnogenesis. According to Tacitus, the separation of this group from the *Chatti*, at some point during the second half of the first century BC, was the result of internal strife.³ The archaeological record, however, points to a clear cultural continuity during this whole period, thus contradicting Tacitus's claim that the *Batavi* had moved into a previously uninhabited territory. In an attempt to reconcile Tacitus with the archaeological record, Nico Roymans has advanced the idea of a small elite group that moved into the area before being rapidly assimilated by the native population. In the case of the *Ubi* who moved to the left bank of the Rhine, in the region of Cologne, we know very well that those responsible for this 'migration' were in fact Roman authorities (more exactly, Agrippa)

³ Tacitus, *Germania* 29.1–2, ed. by Allan A. Lund (Heidelberg, 1988); *Historiae* 4.12, ed. by Rudolf Till and Matthias Gelzer (Heidelberg, 1963).

preoccupied with reinforcing 'their grip on this area and at the same time' with guaranteeing the 'security of the Gallic hinterland'.⁴ Similar treaties may have existed with the *Batavi*, although nothing is known about them. Later alliances between Romans and *Batavi*, as well as parallels between Roman dealings with *Ubii* and *Batavi*, respectively, substantiate the idea. Ubian and Batavian warriors were members of the Germanic bodyguard corps of the Julio-Claudian emperors.⁵ In the light of these considerations, the migration of the *Batavi* to the Lower Rhine must be seen as the result of treaties with the Romans and, therefore, of Roman frontier policies. The evidence of *Triquetrum* coinage suggests close links between the Middle and Lower Rhine areas and thus strengthens the idea of an early move of the *Batavi*. It is possible that the Batavian ethnogenesis had already started in the 40s BC and may have been sparked by the 'Caesarean frontier policy' in the aftermath of the *bellum gallicum*.⁶

Roymans has also noted an interesting distribution pattern for finds of weapons dated to the two centuries around the birth of Christ. Late La Tène swords and helmets are scattered between the Seine and the Rhine rivers. Many are burial finds, but there are also specimens from river deposits and cult sites. By the first century AD, the picture changed dramatically: swords and helmets now appear only along the Rhine, and are completely absent from northern Gaul (Fig. 1).⁷ These different distributions point to fundamental changes in society. Both areas came under Roman occupation at the same time, namely in the middle of the first century BC. But 'martiality as a major cultural theme' of barbarian societies⁸ seems to have disappeared in northern Gaul after the Augustan period, which may be interpreted as a sign of Roman 'demilitarization' or 'pacification' of the natives. Weapons no longer played

⁴ Nico Roymans, 'The Lower Rhine *Triquetrum* Coinages and the Ethnogenesis of the *Batavi*', in *Germania inferior: Besiedlung, Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft an der Grenze der römisch-germanischen Welt*, ed. by Thomas Grünewald and Hans-Joachim Schalles (Berlin, 2001), p. 95. See also Nico Roymans, *Romeinse frontierpolitiek en de etnogenese van de Bataven* (Amsterdam, 1998).

⁵ See Michael P. Speidel, *Riding for Caesar: The Roman Emperors' Horse Guard* (London 1994).

⁶ Roymans, 'Lower Rhine *Triquetrum* Coinages', p. 134.

⁷ Nico Roymans, 'The Sword or the Plough: Regional Dynamics in the Romanisation of Belgic Gaul and the Rhineland Area', in *From the Sword to the Plough: Three Studies on the Earliest Romanisation of Northern Gaul*, ed. by Nico Roymans (Amsterdam, 1996), pp. 9–126, here pp. 15–16 with figs 1–2, and 29–30 with figs 6–7; and 'Romanisation and the Transformation of a Martial Elite-Ideology in a Frontier Province', in *Frontières d'empire: Actes de la table ronde internationale de Nemours 1992* (Paris, 1993), pp. 33–50, here pp. 36 fig. 1, 38 fig. 2, and 44–45 figs 5–6. See also Nico Roymans, *Tribal Societies in Northern Gaul: An Anthropological Perspective* (Amsterdam 1990).

⁸ According to Roymans ('Romanisation and the Transformation of a Martial Elite-Ideology', p. 33), martiality in this context is to be understood both as elite ideology and as violence as a means of social competition.

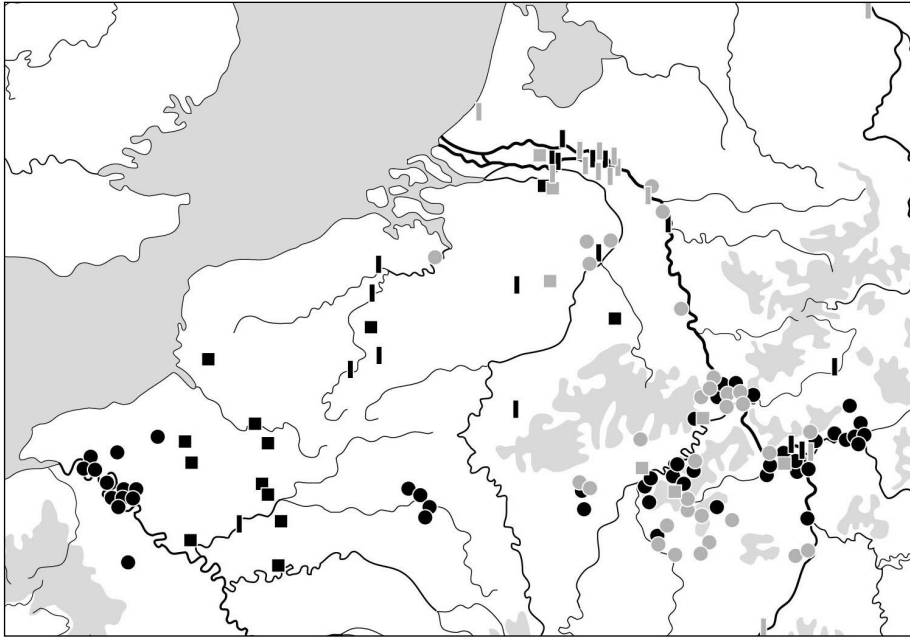


Figure 1. The distribution of swords in northern Gaul and the Rhineland deposited in graves (circle), cult places (square), and rivers (vertical line) during the late La Tène period (black) and the first century AD (grey). Map redrawn by the author after Roymans, 'Romanisation and the Transformation of a Martial Elite-Ideology', pp. 36 fig. 1 and 44 fig. 5.

a role in status representation. By contrast, in the Rhine area this particular form of Romanization may have required a longer period of time. A similar change is visible in that region only from the second century onwards. For barbarian elites in the Rhine region, service in Roman auxiliary troops, military commands, as well as prestige goods remained important for a hundred years longer than for their western neighbours. This interpretation is further strengthened by an examination of the pattern of military recruitment for the Roman army in Belgic Gaul.⁹ The specific location, either within the highly militarized frontier zone or in the already pacified hinterland of Gaul, had a substantial impact on the ways in which indigenous elites defined their social identities, in terms of either 'sword' or 'plow'.¹⁰

The political and military configuration briefly described above did not change in the aftermath of the victory of Arminius's warriors over three Roman legions under

⁹ Roymans, 'Romanisation and the Transformation of a Martial Elite-Ideology', pp. 37–43.

¹⁰ Roymans, 'Romanisation and the Transformation of a Martial Elite-Ideology', pp. 42–88, also describes the respective changes in agrarian regimes.

Varus. In Germany, this particular encounter has long been viewed as a turning point in the struggle for freedom the ancient Germans allegedly put up against the Roman occupation. Such ideas are evident in the use of *Germania libera*, a phrase coined in the 1700s to replace *Germania magna* with a more politically potent shibboleth¹¹ or, to an even greater degree, in the Hermann monument erected near Detmold in what henceforth came to be known as the *Teutoburger Wald*. Following the discovery near Kalkriese, more than fifty miles to the north-west from Detmold, of what may have truly been the battlefield of AD 9 (Fig. 2), historians have recently adopted an interpretation favouring the Roman version of what had happened. Much like Tacitus, they now speak of Varus's battle and defeat (*clades Variana*), not of the *Hermannschlacht*. In doing so, they are certainly right from a strictly archaeological point of view, for nearly all artefacts found on the site — coins, but also *militaria* — are of Roman origin. The slight fortification of the site, a few pits with dozens of partly mutilated skeletons,¹² and the severe damage visible on many artefacts are all strong reminders of the military clash that took place there. However, with the exception of one, single spur, all weapons found in Kalkriese are Roman.¹³ The conclusion seems inescapable: German warriors must have fought with Roman weapons. This, on the other hand, comes as no surprise, for it is known that Arminius and his warriors had served in the Roman army for many years before the battle.¹⁴ One would naturally expect them to have carried Roman weapons, which they then used against Varus's legionaries, that is, against other soldiers of the same army. Such an interpretation reinforces conclusions drawn from the new analysis of the historical record. Historians now speak of AD 9 not as the outcome of a conflict between the civilization of Rome and the barbarian world, but essentially in terms of a Roman military revolt.¹⁵ In other words, far from planning to 'liberate' *Germania* from Roman occupation, Arminius and his Germanic warriors simply aimed at gaining a position of power similar to that of Maroboduus in Bohemia.

¹¹ Maria R[adnóti]-Alföldi, 'Germania magna – nicht libera: Notizen zum römischen Wortgebrauch', *Germania*, 75 (1997), 45–52; Helmut Neumaier, "'Freies Germanien"/"Germania libera": Zur Genese eines historischen Begriffs', *Germania*, 75 (1997), 53–67.

¹² Susanne Wilbers-Rost, 'Die Ausgrabungen auf dem "Oberesch" in Kalkriese: Deponierungen von Menschen- und Tierknochen auf dem Schlachtfeld', in *Rom, Germanien und die Ausgrabungen von Kalkriese: Internationaler Kongreß der Universität Osnabrück und des Landschaftsverbandes Osnabrücker Land 1996*, ed. by Wolfgang Schlüter and Rainer Wiegels (Osnabrück, 1999), pp. 61–89.

¹³ Wolfgang Schlüter, 'Zum Stand der archäologischen Erforschung der Kalkrieser-Niewedder Senke', in *Rom, Germanien und die Ausgrabungen von Kalkriese*, ed. by Schlüter and Wiegels, pp. 13–60.

¹⁴ Tacitus, *Annales* 2.10.3, ed. by Erich Koestermann (Heidelberg, 1963–68); Velleius Paterculus, *Historia Romana* 2.118.2, ed. by Marion Giebel (Stuttgart, 1989).

¹⁵ Dieter Timpe, *Arminius-Studien* (Heidelberg, 1970), p. 49; Walter Pohl, *Die Germanen* (Munich, 2000), p. 96.

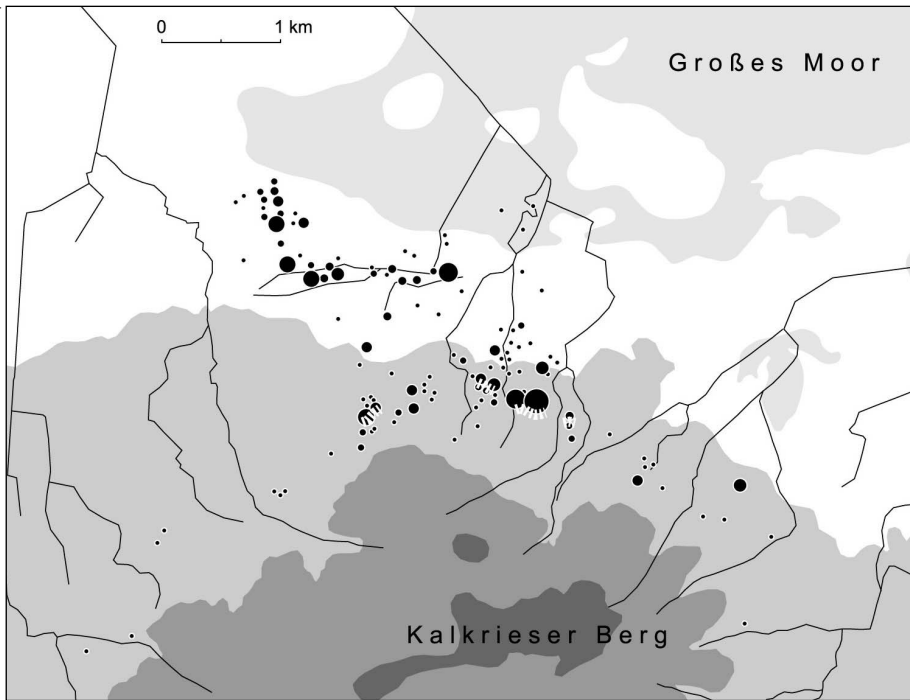


Figure 2. Kalkriese near Osnabrück, the probable location of the battle of AD 9 in a narrow passageway between marshland to the north and hilly terrain to the south. Traces of fortification are indicated in white broken line. Archaeological finds (black dots of various sizes to indicate the number of specimens per find) include coins and Roman *militaria*. Map redrawn by the author after Schlüter, ‘Zum Stand der archäologischen Erforschung’, pp. 30–31 with map 2.

Such an interpretation also provides an explanation for what happened after the military clash of AD 9. Following Arminius’s victory, tensions broke within aristocratic kin groups of the *Cherusci*. Although many details of Tacitus’s description of these events remain unclear, factional strife is a major topic of his narrative. Arminius was now at odds with his father-in-law Segestes, who had cooperated with the Roman troops under Germanicus, while Arminius’s own brother, C. Iulius Flavius, had fought in the Roman army. Several other barbarian groups sided with either one or the other party.¹⁶ Arminius and his *Cherusci* defeated the Marcomanni of Maroboduus, who fled to the Romans and continued to live in Ravenna.¹⁷ Arminius’s life ended at thirty-seven years of age, when he was assassinated by relatives concerned

¹⁶ Tacitus, *Annales* 1.55–68 and 2.9–10, ed. by Koestermann.

¹⁷ Tacitus, *Annales* 2.44–46 and 63, ed. by Koestermann.

with eliminating not the *liberator haud dubie Germaniae*,¹⁸ but a rebelling Roman officer and a Germanic warlord. Many other conflicts arose in *Germania* because of Roman intervention for the appointment of kings, the support of different rivalling groups, or simply as a consequence of misunderstanding the political structures of barbarian society. It was the specific situation that led the chiefs to trust the Romans or to oppose them.

Germanic Chiefs and Roman 'Imports'

A number of very rich burial assemblages appear in *Germania* during the first centuries AD.¹⁹ Known as 'princely graves' because of the wealth of the associated grave goods, these assemblages remain a problem of archaeological interpretation. Currently, the preferred phrase, especially in literature published in English, is 'chief(tain) graves' or 'royal graves'.²⁰ 'Elite graves' seem to be a somewhat more neutral phrase.²¹ Almost all such assemblages are male burials, but a few female burials with equally rich grave goods have been found in Haßleben (where no male burials have been found),²² Zakrzów (former Sackrau, graves II and III),²³ and Weklitz (grave 208).²⁴ With one exception, male burials with rich grave goods produced no weapons,²⁵ despite the fact that these are typically viewed as the graves of military retinue leaders. Occasionally, three silver arrow heads may ritually stand as *pars pro toto* for the deposition of a complete set of bow with arrows. A somewhat greater number of weapons (spear and arrow heads, axes, and swords) have been found in cremation graves, but altogether the quantity of weapons found in burial assemblages remains surprisingly small.

¹⁸ Tacitus, *Annales* 2.88, ed. by Koestermann.

¹⁹ Heiko Steuer, 'Fürstengräber der römischen Kaiserzeit in Germanien. Bestattungen von Grenzgängern', in *Grenzgänger zwischen Kulturen*, ed. by Monika Fludernik and Hans-Joachim Gehrke (Würzburg, 1999), pp. 379–92.

²⁰ In German, there is a certain reticence to use such catchwords, because ever since the translation of James Fenimore Cooper's novels, the term 'Häuptling' is commonly associated with North American Indians and with other 'primitive' peoples.

²¹ Georg Kossack, 'Prunkgräber: Bemerkungen zu Eigenschaften und Aussagewert', in *Studien zur vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie: Festschrift für Joachim Werner zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Georg Kossack and Günter Ulbert, vol. 1 (Munich, 1974), pp. 3–34.

²² Walther Schulz, *Das Fürstengrab und das Grabfeld von Haßleben* (Berlin, 1933).

²³ Wilhelm Grempler, *Der II. und III. Fund von Sackrau* (Berlin, 1888).

²⁴ Jerzy Okulicz-Kozaryn, 'Centrum kulturowe z pierwszych wieków naszej ery u ujścia Wisły', *Barbaricum*, 2 (1992), 137–55, here pp. 149–51 figs 5–6.

²⁵ The exception is Gommern near Magdeburg, a burial assemblage that included a shield. See Matthias Becker, 'Bekleidung, Schmuck, Ausrüstung', in *Gold für die Ewigkeit: Das germanische Fürstengrab von Gommern* (Halle, 2001), pp. 127–47, here p. 142.

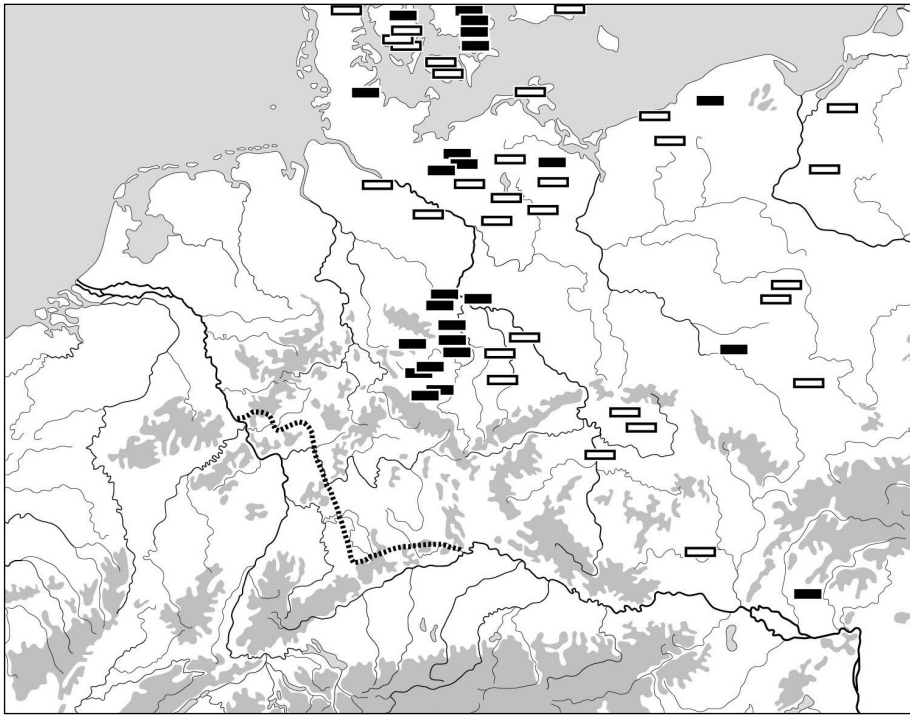


Figure 3. The distribution of rich chief graves of the first three centuries AD: first- to second-century burials of the so-called 'Lübsow type' (white); third- and early fourth-century graves of the so-called group 'Haßleben-Leuna' (black). The dotted line indicates the approximate line of the Roman frontier. Map redrawn by the author after Steuer, 'Fürstengräber der römischen Kaiserzeit', p. 384 fig. 3.

The twentieth-century research has distinguished two separate groups of burials: an earlier group known as 'Lübsow graves' (named so after a site in Polish Pomerania)²⁶ and dated to the first two centuries AD, and a younger one dated to the third century and including such assemblages as Haßleben and Leuna (both in central Germany; Fig. 3).²⁷ A 'royal grave' newly discovered in Mušov (southern Moravia) seems to bridge the chronological gap between these two groups; it has been dated to the late second or early third century (phases B2/C1 of the

²⁶ Michael Gebühr, 'Zur Definition älterkaiserzeitlicher Fürstengräber vom Lübsow-Typ', *Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, 49 (1974), 82–128.

²⁷ Joachim Werner, 'Bemerkungen zur mitteldeutschen Skelettgräbergruppe Haßleben-Leuna: Zur Herkunft der *ingentia auxilia Germanorum* des gallischen Sonderreiches in den Jahren 259–274 n. Chr.', in *Festschrift für Walter Schlesinger*, ed. by Helmut Beumann, vol. 1 (Cologne, 1973), pp. 1–30, here pp. 25–27.

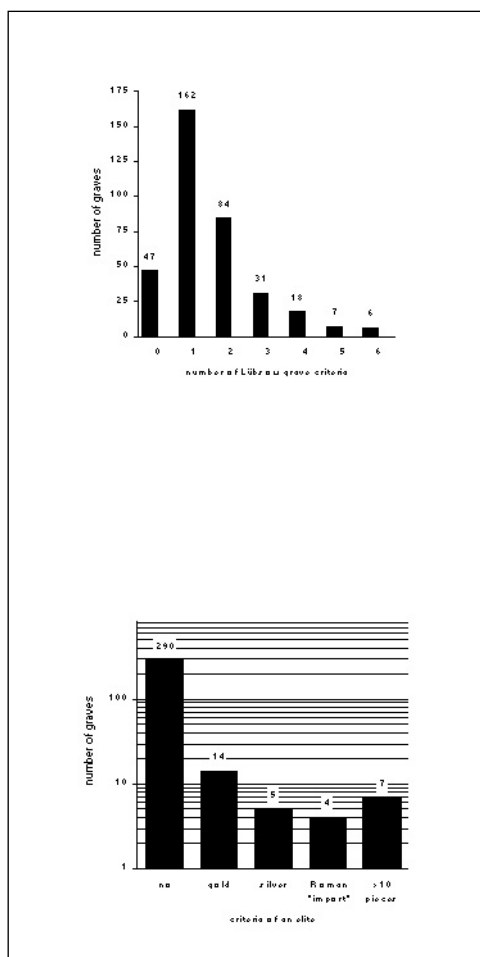


Figure 4. Chief graves of the so-called Lübsow type on the Danish island of Fyn, divided by Eggers's criteria. Below: graves divided by Gebühr's criteria (absence of weapons, gold and silver artefacts, Roman 'imports', and large quantity of grave goods), showing the influence of categorization on analytical results. Charts redrawn by the author after Gebühr, 'Zur Definition älterkaiserzeitlicher Fürstengräber', pp. 116 fig. 5 and 121 fig. 9.

conventional chronology of Central Europe).²⁸ All these burials certainly share some characteristics, but they nevertheless make up quite a heterogeneous group. The combinations of characteristics vary widely: some burials share only two or three variables, while others have five or even more (Fig. 4).²⁹ As a consequence, no sharply differentiated elite can be distinguished, only great variation within these groups. It is likely that they represent individuals of different ranks within basically agrarian societies. It is also true that younger graves tend to share more features among themselves than do earlier ones. This increasing

'homogeneity' may perhaps indicate a more intense communication between barbarian elites, as well as augmented connectivity and conflict with the Roman world.

During the first centuries AD, the majority of the population buried their dead in large cremation cemeteries, yet rich burials were set up separately. They formed small groups of just a few graves located at a considerable distance from larger cemeteries. Moreover, such burials were in many ways different from standard urn

²⁸ Jaroslav Peška and Jaroslav Tejral, *Das germanische Königsgrab von Mušov in Mähren* (Mainz, 2002), p. 512. For the conventional chronology of the early Migration Period, see Kazimierz Godłowski, *The Chronology of the Late Roman and Early Migration Periods in Central Europe* (Cracow, 1970).

²⁹ Gebühr, 'Zur Definition älterkaiserzeitlicher Fürstengräber', pp. 116 fig. 5 and 121 fig. 9.

cremations. First, the preferred burial rite was inhumation, not cremation. The beginnings of inhumation burials in the barbarian regions of Central Europe remain unclear. In the Roman West, inhumation became popular only since the third century,³⁰ mainly as a matter of Greek custom.³¹ Roman influence is therefore out of the question. However, and without any doubt, inhumation served to distinguish a small group of people from the rest. This is also clear from the analysis of other burial aspects, such as stones piled on top of large wooden chambers or the choice of an isolated location. Since such burials appear singly or in small numbers, the phenomenon may betray increased social mobility: no chief was capable to establish a 'dynasty' for a period long enough to have a separate cemetery of its own.

All known chief graves have been found more than 200 km away from the nearest point on the Roman frontier, within an area stretching from Slovakia in Central Europe up to Denmark and southern Sweden.³² In spite of the distance, there are numerous artefacts of Roman origin among grave goods found with chief graves: bronze, silver, and glass drinking vessels (mostly Hemmoor buckets and glass beakers produced in the region of Cologne); coins,³³ and furniture. Such grave goods appear to be a selection of available goods of Roman origin, as indicated by comparable settlement finds.³⁴ The selection was based on criteria that had much more to do with Germanic fashions or 'taste' than with Roman concepts of 'wealth'. In fact, such Roman 'imports' are instrumental for drawing comparisons between burials of different dates and origins. The *habitus* of the elite seems to have found its material correlate in Roman, that is, 'foreign', luxury goods and was expressed in an overwhelmingly symbolic language. Consequently, barbarian representation was inconceivable without permanent links to the Empire. Since they must have reached

³⁰ Ian Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 31–69; Jocelyn M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (London, 1971), pp. 33–64.

³¹ Petronius, *Satyricon* 111.2, ed. by C. Hoffmann (Munich, 1937): *graeco more corpus custodire*.

³² Much of what was not associated with chief graves but is interpreted as 'Roman imports' has a similar distribution. See Jürgen Kunow, *Der römische Import in der Germania libera bis zu den Markomannenkriegen* (Neumünster, 1983), pp. 173–74 with maps 3 and 4. On the other hand, isolated coins were found in large numbers next to the Roman frontiers.

³³ The *aurei* minted in the 260s have been interpreted as payments to Germanic soldiers in the army of the Gallic Empire of Postumus. See Werner, 'Bemerkungen zur mitteldeutschen Skelettgräbergruppe'. But as Michael Erdrich has noted, the central regions of Germany have also produced coins struck in the main imperial mints. See Michael Erdrich, *Rom und die Barbaren: Das Verhältnis zwischen dem Imperium Romanum und den germanischen Stämmen vor seiner Nordwestgrenze von der späten römischen Republik bis zum gallischen Sonderreich* (Mainz, 2001), p. 131.

³⁴ Matthias Becker, 'Klasse und Masse: Überlegungen zu römischem Sachgut im germanischen Milieu', *Germania*, 81 (2003), 277–88.

Germania by different ways, ranging from ‘diplomatic’ gifts and exchange to booty and payments for service in the imperial army, Roman ‘imports’³⁵ are a mirror of relations established between barbarians and Romans. However, the discovery of pottery of ‘Roman’ technology in a production centre excavated in Haarhausen (Thuringia)³⁶ shows that some of the alleged ‘imports’ were in fact local products. Nevertheless, the Roman influence was fundamental for the self-representation of Germanic elites. Barbarian aristocrats crossed ‘borders’ in more than one way: as soldiers in the Roman army; as beneficiaries of a special burial rite; and, finally, as the only members of barbarian societies with access to a grandiose lifestyle.

Archaeologists have identified another aspect of ‘centralization’ within *barbaricum*. Besides rich graves, there are also settlements particularly rich in finds. Such ‘centres of wealth’ have been found in Jutland (Gudme and Lundeberg on the Fyn Island), southern Sweden (Uppåkra),³⁷ Uppland (Helgö), and Norway (as far north as Borg in the Lofoten Islands).³⁸ All these sites have produced evidence of craft production (metal- and glassworking), as well as of luxury goods of foreign origin. They are often associated with wealthy burials found nearby. Other finds bespeak ritual functions, such as those signalled by the *goldgubber* (thin metal sheets decorated with human figures) found in Sorte Muld (Bornholm).³⁹ There is currently much discussion about the degree of integration and the nature of relations between leading farmsteads within local communities, on the one hand, and regional centres, on the other.

³⁵ Kunow, *Der römische Import*; Ulla Lund Hansen, *Römischer Import im Norden: Warenaustausch zwischen dem Römischen Reich und dem freien Germanien während der Kaiserzeit unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Nordeuropa* (Copenhagen, 1987); Erdrich, *Rom und die Barbaren*. See also *Corpus der römischen Funde im europäischen Barbaricum: Deutschland*, vol. I: *Bundesländer Brandenburg und Berlin*; vol. II: *Freistaat Sachsen*; vol. III: *Bundesland Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*; vol. IV: *Hansestadt Bremen und Bundesland Niedersachsen* (Bonn, 1994–2002); *Korpus znalezisk rzymskich z europejskiego Barbaricum. Polska 1*. Mazowsze (Warsaw, 2001); and *Corpus der römischen Funde im europäischen Barbaricum: Litauen* (Vilnius, 2001).

³⁶ Sigrid Dušek, *Römische Handwerker im germanischen Thüringen: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen in Haarhausen, Kr. Arnstadt* (Stuttgart, 1992).

³⁷ See *Centrality, Regionality: The Social Structure of Southern Sweden during the Iron Age*, ed. by Lars Larsson and Birgitta Hårdh (Stockholm, 2003).

³⁸ Ulla Lund Hansen, ‘Handelszentren der römischen Kaiserzeit und Völkerwanderungszeit in Dänemark’, in *Trade and Exchange in Prehistory: Studies in Honour of Berta Stjernquist*, ed. by Birgitta Hårdh (Lund, 1988), pp. 155–66; Lotte Hedeager, *Iron Age Societies: From Tribe to State in Northern Europe* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 180–223; Heiko Steuer, ‘Archäologie und germanische Sozialgeschichte: Forschungstendenzen in den 1990er Jahren’, in *Runische Schriftkultur in kontinental-skandinavischer und -angelsächsischer Wechselbeziehung*, ed. by Klaus Düwel (Berlin, 1994), pp. 10–55, here pp. 27–33.

³⁹ Margarete Watt, ‘Die Goldblechfiguren (“goldgubber”) aus Sorte Muld, Bornholm’, in *Der Historische Horizont der Götterbild-Amulette aus der Übergangsepoche von der Spätantike zum Frühmittelalter*, ed. by Karl Hauck (Göttingen, 1992), pp. 195–227.

Roman Politics and Barbarian Marauders and Soldiers

During the third century the political situation along the Roman frontier changed dramatically. Groups of barbarian marauders coming from *Germania* began raiding the neighbouring Roman provinces. To Roman eyes, differences between individual groups did not matter much: all of them created havoc and were a menace to everyday life in frontier provinces. Not before the late 200s, two new groups, the Franks and the *Alamanni*, made their first appearance. Both were mentioned in imperial panegyrics written around AD 290, while all earlier mentions seem to be much later interpolations, a detail historians have long overlooked.⁴⁰ These two large groups of marauders appear to have operated in two different areas, the *Alamanni* to the east from the upper Rhine and the Franks to the east of the lower course of that river. The border between their respective zones ran somewhere along the Main. This particular distribution was dictated by the configuration of neighbouring Roman provinces: the Franks settled on the frontier of *Germania inferior*, while the *Alamanni* focused on *Germania superior*.⁴¹

This dual confrontation strongly suggests that the rise of new *gentes* replacing the ones of the first two centuries AD was not just a matter of barbarian development. Instead, Roman categorization seems to have played a crucial role in the process. Ethnographic models and the conceptualization of the barbarian otherness were certainly important. However, in practice political interests dictated action. The administration needed partners for reliable treaties that could guarantee political stability in *Germania*. By encouraging and patronizing some barbarian leaders and marginalizing others, the Romans attempted to create a framework within which they could operate politically and militarily. Peter Heather has aptly called 'client management' this particular form of power to influence events beyond the frontier. The elites received gifts, as clearly shown in the archaeological record, while the Romans preserved their ability to organize military campaigns, occasionally assassinating undesirable chiefs, and to send spies for collecting much-needed intelligence. A 'belt' of some 100 km beyond the frontier was thus created and incorporated into the Roman system. The 'belt' supplied young men for military service in the Roman army (later recruited within self-contained units with their own officers) and, in addition, grain for the Roman troops.⁴² On the other hand the client kingdoms were not passive

⁴⁰ Mamertinus, *Panegyricus Maximiano* 5.1; *Panegyricus Constantio* 17.1–2; 8.3; Eumenius, *Orationes* 18.3. For all these sources, see *XII panegyrici latini*, ed. by Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors (Oxford, 1964), pp. 215–29, 230–43, and 244–55. See also Pohl, *Die Germanen*, p. 33.

⁴¹ The settlement of the *Alamanni* may also have been the result of the collapse of the Roman frontier in 260. See Hans Ulrich Nuber, 'Zur Entstehung des Stammes der *Alamanni* aus römischer Sicht', in *Die Franken und die Alemannen bis zur 'Schlacht bei Zülpich' (496/97)*, ed. by Dieter Geuenich (Berlin, 1998), pp. 367–83.

⁴² Peter Heather, 'The Late Roman Art of Client Management: Imperial Defence in the Fourth Century West', in *The Transformation of Frontiers: From Late Antiquity to the*

participants but enjoyed a great deal of political autonomy and at times even successfully challenged Roman policies in the region. The clients were 'an integrated, if subordinate, part of the Roman imperial system' which was the object of 'a set of interrelated policies of building, campaigning and political manipulation'.⁴³ Ideologically seen as 'the other', clients were destined to lead a precarious existence. The stark contradiction between the practice of client management and the traditional discourse about barbarians does not seem to have seriously troubled Roman authors.

As annoying as they may have been for the Roman administration preoccupied with maintaining peace within the border provinces, marauding bands were rarely a match for the Roman armies. Still, Roman victories over *Franci* and *Alamanni* were celebrated on coins. For example, the reverse of a solidus minted for Emperor Constantine in Pavia in 315 shows a triumphal monument in the middle, with two mourning female figures sitting on either side. These are FRANC(IA) and ALEM(ANNIA), respectively, and the whole scene is described as GAUDIUM ROMANORUM.⁴⁴ At times, emperors styled themselves with such epithets as *Germanicus*, *Alamannicus*, or *Francicus (maximus)*, all attested in contemporary inscriptions. Some of the defeated barbarians may have recognized themselves in such names, but by no means did all *Alamanni* or *Franci* take part in these confrontations.

Some of the Roman 'imports' found in graves were probably diplomatic gifts or payments for Germanic chiefs and their retinue warriors. Both were especially popular during Late Antiquity and may have been responsible for the presence of a significant quantity of gold artefacts found beyond the frontiers of the Roman Empire. However, an equally large number of 'imports' must have been the result of marauding. It is difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate between the two on the basis of the archaeological record alone. A large quantity of bronze vessels and other artefacts were dredged out of the Rhine River near Neupotz and have been interpreted as (part of) the booty lost by Alamannic warriors while crossing the river.⁴⁵ But the dating is far from being secured, as many pieces of scrap metal have been found with this assemblage that should perhaps be rather viewed as a river (deliberate) deposit. A similar assemblage is known from Hagenbach and may have been deposited in similar circumstances.⁴⁶ In most other cases, especially with grave goods, it is impossible to establish the ways by which Roman goods ended up in barbarian burial assemblages. Most likely, there is more than one possible explanation.

Carolingians, ed. by Walter Pohl, Ian Wood, and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden, 2001), pp. 15–68, here pp. 26–35.

⁴³ Heather, 'Late Roman Art of Client Management', pp. 56 and 67.

⁴⁴ Max Martin, 'Zwischen den Fronten: Alamannen im römischen Heer', in *Die Alamannen* (Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 119–24, here p. 121 fig. 115.

⁴⁵ Ernst Künzl, *Die Alamannenbeute aus dem Rhein bei Neupotz: Plünderungsgut aus dem römischen Gallien* (Bonn, 1993).

⁴⁶ Helmut Bernhard and others, *Der römische Schatzfund von Hagenbach* (Mainz, 1990).

Ever since the fourth century, large groups of Germanic warriors were recruited in the Roman army.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, they remained a minority within the military personnel of the Empire.⁴⁸ Many mounts and strap ends of military belts have been found in the regions east of the river Rhine, mainly in male burials dated to the fourth and fifth centuries (Fig. 5).⁴⁹ Later forms appear in northern Gaul (mostly along the river Meuse), in south-west Britain, and between the Weser and Elbe rivers. Such dress accessories are believed to represent Germanic soldiers in the Roman army returning home at the end of their military service. Böhme has suggested that only a few *fabricae* within the Empire produced such accessories,⁵⁰ but moulds for their production have meanwhile been found beyond the Roman frontier, a clear indication that at least some of them were made in *barbaricum*.⁵¹ A few specimens have turned up in female graves,⁵² which suggests that such artefacts are not necessarily accessories of the Roman military uniform. The predominant form of decoration is chip-carving (*Kerbschnitt*), which was very popular during Late Antiquity across a large area of Europe, as attested by so-called *tutulus* fibulae of the Elbe-Weser triangle (but frequently found in northern Gaul as well)⁵³ and by wooden artefacts found on the North Sea coast.⁵⁴ In conclusion, Roman military dress and culture seems to have influenced Germanic apparel, but also the decoration of other categories of objects, while in their home country retired soldiers were marked in

⁴⁷ Dietrich Hoffmann, 'Wadomar, Bacurius und Hariulf: Zur Laufbahn adeliger und fürstlicher Barbaren im spätrömischen Heere des 4. Jahrhunderts', *Museum Helveticum*, 35 (1978), 307–18; Manfred Waas, *Germanen im römischen Dienst (im 4. Jh. n. Chr.)*, 2nd edn (Bonn, 1971); Thomas S. Burns, *Barbarians within the Gates of Rome: A Study of Roman Military Policy and the Barbarians, ca. 375–425 A.D.* (Bloomington, 1994).

⁴⁸ Hugh Elton, *Warfare in Europe, A.D. 350–425* (Oxford, 1996), p. 148.

⁴⁹ Horst Wolfgang Böhme, *Germanische Grabfunde des 4. und 5. Jahrhunderts zwischen unterer Elbe und Loire: Studien zur Chronologie und Bevölkerungsgeschichte* (Munich, 1974); and 'Söldner und Siedler im spätantiken Nordgallien', in *Die Franken: Wegbereiter Europas: vor 1500 Jahren, König Chlodwig und seine Erben* (Mainz, 1996), pp. 91–101.

⁵⁰ Böhme, *Germanische Grabfunde*, pp. 55–62, 73–75, and 92–97.

⁵¹ Heiko Steuer, 'Handwerk auf spätantiken Höhensiedlungen des 4./5. Jahrhunderts in Südwestdeutschland', in *The Archaeology of Gudme and Lundeberg*, ed. by Poul Otto Nielsen, Klavs Randsborg, and Henrik Thrane (Copenhagen, 1994), pp. 128–44, here pp. 133–35.

⁵² Christel Bucker, 'Reibschalen, Gläser und Militärgürtel: Römischer Lebensstil im freien Germanien', in *Die Alamannen*, pp. 135–41, here pp. 138, 141 with n. 19 (citing finds from Schleithem-Hebsack, Heidelberg-Neuenheim, and Werbach).

⁵³ Böhme, *Germanische Grabfunde*, pp. 14–19; and 'Söldner und Siedler', p. 94 fig. 68. See also Tania M. Dickinson, 'Material Culture as Social Expression: The Case of Saxon Saucer Brooches with Running Spiral Decoration', *Studien zur Sachsenforschung*, 7 (1991), 39–70.

⁵⁴ Matthias D. Schön, *Der Thron aus der Marsch: Ausgrabungen an der Fallward bei Wremen im Landkreis Cuxhaven*, vol. 1 (Cuxhaven, 1995); and Feddersen Wierde, Fallward, Flögeln: *Archäologie im Museum Burg Bederkesa, Landkreis Cuxhaven* (Bremerhaven, 1999).

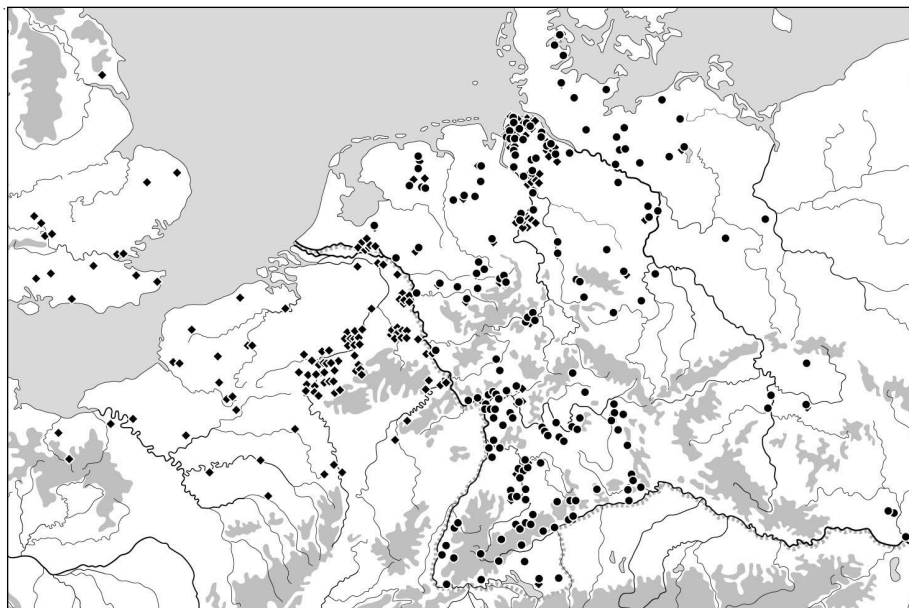


Figure 5. Distribution of Late Roman military belt fittings in north-western Europe: fourth to fifth century (circle); middle of the fifth century (diamond). Map redrawn by the author after Böhme, 'Söldner und Siedler', pp. 98 fig. 73 and 100 fig. 75.

burial with Roman belts. Frontier and periphery (at least from a Roman point of view) show no clear differences.⁵⁵

Besides such military aspects, several stylistic forms among the northern barbarians were influenced by Roman artistic repertoires, and cannot therefore be seen as a genuinely 'Germanic art'. The famous animal style is in fact inspired by late antique representations of animals, modified and readapted to the principles of representation of early medieval art.⁵⁶ The sources of inspiration for the so-called bracteates were Roman medals and coins, despite the fact that the meaning of the represented portraits and scenes seems to have often been misunderstood.⁵⁷ Imitation was

⁵⁵ For relations between frontiers and peripheries, see Charles Richard Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore, 1994); *Transformation of Frontiers*, ed. by Pohl, Wood, and Reimitz.

⁵⁶ Günther Haseloff, *Die germanische Tierornamentik der Völkerwanderungszeit: Studien zu Salin's Stil I* (Berlin, 1981).

⁵⁷ Karl Hauck, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit* (Munich, 1985–89); Morten Axboe, 'The Scandinavian Gold Bracteates: Studies on their Manufacture and Regional Variations', *Acta Archaeologica*, 52 (1981), 1–87.

probably concerned with pure ornamentation, without much concern for anything else. At any rate, it is clear that the underlying principles were directly associated with barbarian ideas and imagery. Exactly what the functions of these artefacts might have been is a matter of dispute. They may have served as markers of identity for warrior groups,⁵⁸ but more research is needed to substantiate this hypothesis.

Some Alamannic high-ranking officers of the mid-fourth century are mentioned in Ammianus Marcellinus's *Res gestae*. Nothing comparable is known for the first half of that century. According to Ammianus, until the 360s, Alamannic commanders had a major role in the Roman army. With the change of dynasty from the line of Constantine to that of Valentinian, attitudes towards Alamannic recruits changed. Frankish officers, already attested in the 350s, were now given more attention, while their Alamannic homologues lost reputation within a very short period of time (Fig. 6).⁵⁹ Valentinian's political interests were associated to the Franks, as well as to northern Gaul,⁶⁰ most likely because of the shifting power configuration. Conversely, this reorientation had implications for the ongoing developments along the Rhine frontier. In the end, the Franks established kingdoms while defeating the *Alamanni*. What is meant by Franks and *Alamanni*, respectively, is not always clear in each individual case, for such names may reflect both ethnic and geographic classifications.⁶¹ The same may well be true for Gothic groups along the Danube frontier of the Empire.⁶²

During the fourth and fifth centuries a number of hilltop sites began to appear in *Germania* (Fig. 7),⁶³ as well as elsewhere in *barbaricum*, and even within the borders

⁵⁸ Lotte Hedeager, 'The Creation of Germanic Identity', in *Frontières d'empire: Nature et signification des frontières* (Nemours, 1993), pp. 121–31; Karen Højlund Nielsen, 'Animal Style. A Symbol of Might and Myth: Salin's Style II in a European Context', *Acta Archaeologica*, 69 (1998), 1–52; Claus von Carnap and Gordian Schweitzer, 'Der "Helmbeschlag" aus Domagnano: Überlegungen zur Herkunft des "Vogel-Fisch-Motivs"', in '*... trans Albim fluvium*': *Forschungen zur vorrömischen, kaiserzeitlichen und mittelalterlichen Archäologie. Festschrift Achim Leube*, ed. by Michael Meyer (Rahden, 2001), pp. 223–38.

⁵⁹ Martin, 'Zwischen den Fronten'.

⁶⁰ John F. Drinkwater, 'Julian and the Franks and Valentinian I and the Alamanni: Ammianus on Romano-German Relations', *Francia*, 24 (1997), 1–15.

⁶¹ For this problem, see Sebastian Brather, *Ethnische Interpretationen in der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie: Geschichte, Grundlagen und Alternativen* (Berlin, 2004).

⁶² See Florin Curta, 'Frontier Ethnogenesis in Late Antiquity: The Danube, the Tervingi, and the Slavs' (in this volume).

⁶³ Heiko Steuer and Michael Hoepfer, 'Germanische Höhensiedlungen am Schwarzwaldrand und das Ende der römischen Grenzverteidigung am Rhein', *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins*, 150 (2002), 41–72; Jochen Haberstroh, 'Der Reisberg bei Scheßlitz-Burgellern in der Völkerwanderungszeit: Überlegungen zum 5. Jahrhundert n. Chr. in Nordbayern', *Germania*, 81 (2003), 201–62.

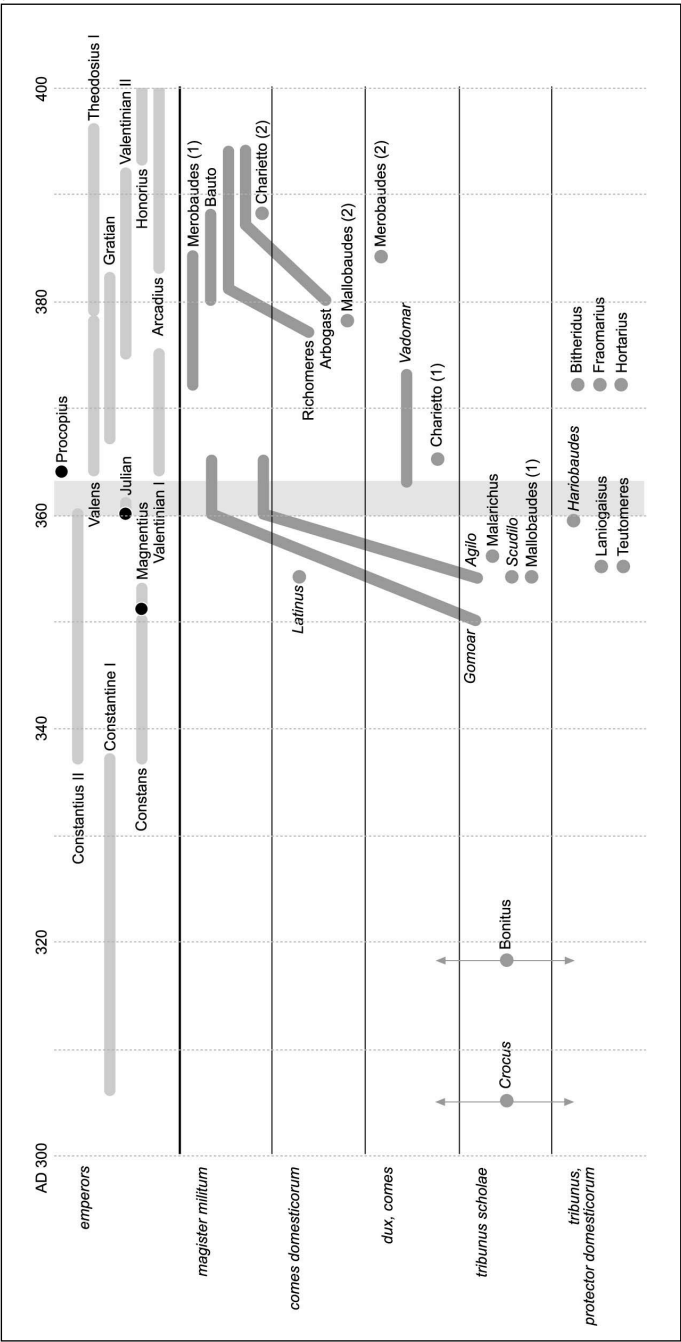


Figure 6. Germanic high military commanders in the Roman army during the fourth century. Lines represent continuous imperial reigns (in grey) or officer curricula (in black). Names of officers of Alamannic origin are in italics. The diagram shows that in the aftermath of the coronation of Valens and Valentinian, the Franks were the dominant group among the high officers of Germanic origin. Diagram redrawn by the author after Martin, 'Zwischen den Fronten', p. 122 fig. 119.

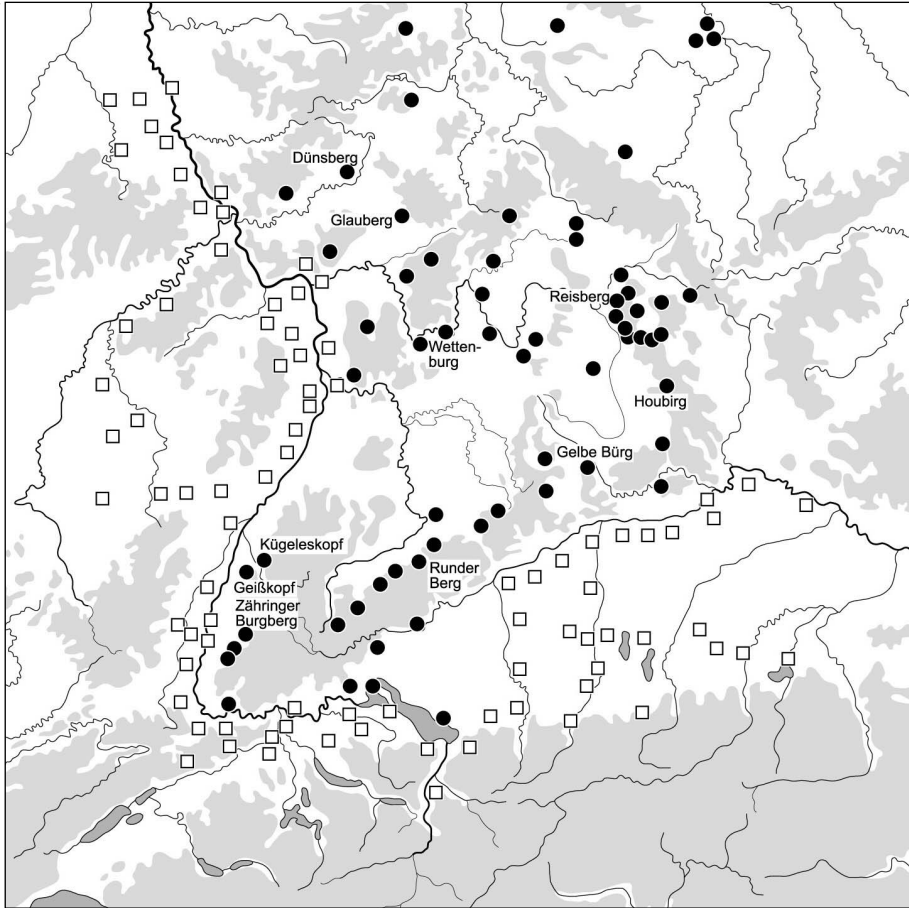


Figure 7. Hilltop sites (full circle) and Late Roman camps (square) in southwestern Germany. Sites with large-scale excavations or with large quantities of artefacts are indicated by name. Map redrawn by the author after Steuer and Hoepfer, 'Germanische Höhensiedlungen', p. 44 fig. 2; and Haberstroh, 'Der Reisberg bei Scheßlitz-Burgellern', p. 202 fig. 1.

of the Empire.⁶⁴ Despite common features, such sites need to be considered against the background of the regional networks of settlements. The fundamental questions

⁶⁴ See Volker Bierbrauer, 'Frühmittelalterliche *castra* im östlichen und mittleren Alpengebiet: Germanische Wehranlagen oder romanische Siedlungen?', *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt*, 15 (1985), 497–513; Slavko Ciglenečki, *Höhenbefestigungen aus der Zeit vom 3 bis 6. Jahrhundert im Ostalpenraum* (Ljubljana, 1987); Klaus-Josef Gilles, *Spätromische Höhensiedlungen in Eifel und Hunsrück* (Trier, 1985).

raised by these settlements concern the reasons for their specific siting and their specific functions. Ammianus provides some indication of what may serve as an explanation for the situation on the upper Rhine River. According to him, Germanic warriors and marauders always flew into dark, impenetrable forests and to inaccessible heights.⁶⁵ It is therefore possible that the sites in question were gathering points or bases of operation for groups of barbarian warriors. This explanation certainly fits the evidence from the Geißkopf site, which consists almost exclusively of military equipment with very little fragments of pottery or glass.⁶⁶ The associated finds and the lack of building structures substantiate the idea of a temporary occupation of the site. Elsewhere, the situation is somewhat different. For example, on the Zähringer Burgberg near Freiburg vast terraces and (most likely unfinished) constructions suggest the existence of some residential seat of an Alamannic military chief or *rex*.⁶⁷ Another well-known residential 'court' dated to c. AD 500 was found on the Runder Berg near Urach, but unlike others, this site is located at a considerable distance from the old Roman frontier.⁶⁸ Responsible for the building of hilltop sites may have been Alamannic chiefs such as Gundomad and Vadomar mentioned by Ammianus.

However, there is yet another possible explanation. Both the topography and the military character of such sites suggest that they may as well be Roman outposts beyond the frontier, 'watch-towers' of sorts designed to provide early warnings of Germanic raids. The inhabitants may well have been of Germanic origin, probably federates specifically employed for such tasks. This explanation has already been

⁶⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 31.10.12–17, ed. by Wolfgang Seyfarth (Berlin, 1968–71).

⁶⁶ Michael Hoepfer and Heiko Steuer, 'Eine völkerwanderungszeitliche Höhenstation am Oberrhein, der Geißkopf bei Berghaupten, Ortenaukreis: Höhensiedlung, Kultplatz oder Militärlager?', *Germania*, 77 (1999), 185–246.

⁶⁷ Heiko Steuer, *Die Alamannen auf dem Zähringer Burgberg* (Stuttgart, 1990); and 'Archäologie und Geschichte des Zähringer Burgbergs', in *Geschichte der Stadt Freiburg im Breisgau I: Von den Anfängen bis zum 'Neuen Stadtrecht' von 1520*, ed. by Heiko Haumann and Hans Schadek (Stuttgart, 1996), pp. 303–19.

⁶⁸ Rainer Christlein, *Die frühgeschichtlichen Kleinfunde außerhalb der Plangrabungen* (Sigmaringen, 1974); Bernd Kaschau, *Die Drehscheibenkeramik aus den Plangrabungen 1967–1972* (Sigmaringen, 1976); Rainer Christlein, *Kleinfunde der frühgeschichtlichen Perioden aus den Plangrabungen 1967–1972* (Sigmaringen, 1979); Ursula Koch, *Die Metallfunde der frühgeschichtlichen Perioden aus den Plangrabungen 1967–1981* (Sigmaringen, 1984); Ursula Koch, *Die Glas- und Edelsteinfunde aus den Plangrabungen 1967–1983* (Sigmaringen, 1994); Ursula Koch, *Frühgeschichtliche Funde von den Hängen und Terrassen und Nachträge zu Urach V und VI* (Sigmaringen, 1991); Ursula Koch, *Frühgeschichtliche Funde aus Bein, Geräte aus Ton und Stein aus den Plangrabungen 1967–1984* (Sigmaringen, 1994); Katrin Roth-Rubi, *Die scheibengedrehte Gebrauchskeramik vom Runden Berg* (Sigmaringen, 1991); Silvia Spors-Gröger, *Die handgemachte frühalamannische Keramik aus den Plangrabungen 1967–1984* (Sigmaringen, 1997).

advanced for the Kreuzwertheim-Wettenburg site near Urphar, on the river Main.⁶⁹ It is also possible that at work was a combination of different factors. Indeed, historical sources clearly show that alliances between Germanic military leaders and the Roman administration changed frequently and quickly, with former enemies becoming allies and vice versa. Hilltop sites may thus have been the bases of operation for friends at one time and foes at another. Rapid political changes make it impossible to identify the exact function any given site had at any given moment. Moreover, occupation on all hilltop sites along the upper Rhine ended in the mid-fifth century, as clearly indicated by associated metal finds with secured chronology,⁷⁰ and this correlates well with the abandonment of Late Roman forts in the region. Occupation continued for a few more decades only on residential sites such as Zähringer Burgberg or Runder Berg. As a consequence, these remarkable settlements must be interpreted in the light of concurrent developments on the frontier. In fact, and despite some chronological discrepancies, hilltop sites may well have been the first settlements of the soon-to-become *Alamanni*, for most lowland rural sites attributed to them are dated later, namely to the late fourth century.⁷¹

All hilltop sites produced evidence of industrial activities. A great number of fragmentary bronze vessels,⁷² belt mounts, and horse gear accessories were recycled for new casts in Geißkopf and Kügeleskopf. Much, if not all, raw material was obtained from recycling. As for the new casts, moulds and semi-finished products point to the production of Late Roman belt mounts, some with chip-carved decoration (such as found in Noyers-sur-Derein, Mamer, Bonn, and Emmerich-Past), belt buckles (Urphar, Glauberg), and bow fibulae (Runder Berg). Scales and weights (Runder Berg, Zähringer Burgberg), as well as silver ingots (Zähringer Burgberg), point to either non-ferrous metalworking or, possibly, trade. Furthermore, a great number of tools have been identified, especially in Runder Berg.⁷³ Although industrial activities seem to have been a general characteristic of all hilltop sites, the specific circumstances in which they developed varied greatly. Bronze metalworking was common

⁶⁹ Ludwig Wamser, 'Eine völkerwanderungszeitliche Befestigung im Freien Germanien: Die Mainschleife bei Urphar, Markt Kreuzwertheim, Ldkr. Main-Spessart, Unterfranken', *Das archäologische Jahr in Bayern 1981* (1982), 156–57.

⁷⁰ Steuer and Hoeper, 'Germanische Höhensiedlungen', pp. 57–71.

⁷¹ Hoeper and Steuer, 'Eine völkerwanderungszeitliche Höhenstation', p. 187, citing Christel Bucker, *Frühe Alamannen im Breisgau: Untersuchungen zu den Anfängen der germanischen Besiedlung im Breisgau während des 4. und 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (Sigmaringen 1999).

⁷² Michael Hoeper, 'Kochkessel, Opfergabe, Urne, Grabbeigabe, Altmetall: Zur Funktion und Typologie der Westlandkessel auf dem Kontinent', in *Archäologie als Sozialgeschichte: Studien zu Siedlung, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im frühgeschichtlichen Mitteleuropa. Festschrift Heiko Steuer*, ed. by Sebastian Brather, Christel Bucker, and Michael Hoeper (Rahden, 1999), pp. 235–49.

⁷³ Steuer, 'Handwerk auf spätantiken Höhensiedlungen', pp. 128–44.

everywhere, but evidence of production of high-quality jewellery can be found only on certain residential sites. It is therefore possible that such settlements operated as both economic and political centres.

During Late Antiquity, warfare was an endemic phenomenon not just across the frontier, between Romans and Germans, but also within the barbarian world, between various Germanic groups. Since raids were now the basis for prestige and wealth of both the chief and his retinue of warriors, which in turn was the basis for the continuing existence of the group, raiding became a fundamental dimension of social life.⁷⁴ This may have led to further conflicts between competing chiefs or groups, a phenomenon reflected in the archaeological record by deposits of military gear.⁷⁵ Although competition and violence were a common phenomenon throughout barbarian history, the majority of these deposits are dated to the late antique period, with only a few reaching back to the Late Iron Age (Hjortspring) or early Roman period (Thorsberg, Vimose). Finds cluster in southern Scandinavia, primarily because of specific environmental settings that made possible the excellent preservation of finds. The circumstances of deposition, the composition of the deposits and their chronology indicate no sequence of deposition on any one site, as every site produced only one or just a few deposits (Table 1). The number of weapons and pieces of military equipment, though often incomplete, show that involved in military conflicts at that time were fairly large groups of people. Weapon deposits also point to changing social relations and to the growing power of chiefs wielding influence over ever-increasing areas.

The New Cultural Trends of the 400s

By AD 400, several burials with rich grave goods began appearing along the northern periphery of the Late Roman Empire (Fig. 8).⁷⁶ They all seem to reflect a common *habitus*. There is no clear-cut regional variation, as most finds are well furnished

⁷⁴ Heiko Steuer, 'Kriegerbanden und Heerkönige: Krieg als Auslöser der Entwicklung vom Stamm zum Staat im ersten Jahrtausend n. Chr. in Mitteleuropa. Überlegungen zu einem theoretischen Modell', in *Runica, Germanica, Mediaevalia: Festschrift Klaus Düwel*, ed. by Wilhelm Heizmann and Astrid van Nahl (Berlin, 2003), pp. 824–53.

⁷⁵ For Nydam, perhaps the best known assemblage of this kind, see Güde Bemmann and Jan Bemmann, *Der Opferplatz von Nydam: Die Funde aus den älteren Grabungen. Nydam-I und Nydam-II* (Neumünster, 1998). See also Jørgen Ilkjær, *Illerup Ådal 1–2: Die Lanzen und Speere* (Århus, 1990), and *Illerup Ådal 3–4: Die Gürtel. Bestandteile und Zubehör* (Århus, 1993); Claus v. Carnap-Bornheim and Jørgen Ilkjær, *Illerup Ådal 5–8: Die Prachtausrüstungen* (Århus, 1996).

⁷⁶ See *Das Gold der Barbarenfürsten: Schätze aus Prunkgräbern des 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. zwischen Kaukasus und Gallien*, ed. by Alfried Wiczorek and Patrick Périn (Stuttgart, 2001).

Table 1. Late antique and early medieval deposits of military gear. On any one site, there are only small numbers of deposits including weaponry of large warrior bands or armies. The number of warriors in question remains unclear, for it is impossible to establish whether such a band was completely annihilated, all its military equipment was laid down, or if the equipment has been completely uncovered (after Brather, *Ethnische Interpretationen*, p. 385 tab. 10)

Site	<i>spatha</i> /sword	lance/spear	shield	bows	arrow	horse gear	approximate number of warriors	chronology
Thorsberg			>42		200–300		(several hundreds)	2nd–4th c.
Vimose	100	1000	>150				>500	2nd–4th c.
Illemose	1	10	15				15	first half of 3rd c.
Ejlsbøl-North	60/60	>200/200	200		>675	9	>200	2nd–early 5th c.
Skedemosse	>44	1000–1500	>48		11	>4	500–800	2nd–5th c.
Vallerbæk	8	30					15	
Illerup Ådal A		776		7		10	450?	mid-3rd c.
Illerup Ådal B		240					>100?	mid-3rd c.
Illerup Ådal A/B	146	212	387		201		400?	3rd c.
Nydam I	>100	552	>75	30			>300	3rd–5th c.
Hedelisker	5	14	10		32		>10	3rd–5th c.
Illerup Ådal C	79	177	43		123		100?	late 4th c.
Nydam II	c. 12			c. 5			N. II/III: 90	mid-4th–6th c.
Kragehul	>6				Several			mid-4th–mid-6th c.
Porskær	c. 70							5th–early 7th c.



Figure 8. Key finds pertaining to fourth- and fifth-century barbarian elites in Central Europe. Map redrawn by the author after *Das Gold der Barbarenfürsten*, ed. by Wiczorek and Périn, pp. 86–87; and Schmauder, ‘Imperial Representation or Barbaric Imitation?’

with golden artefacts, including some exceptional pieces of Roman jewellery.⁷⁷ This seems to indicate that ‘chiefs’, as well as some ‘princesses’ buried after c. 400 needed and proudly displayed the support and assistance they received from the imperial administration, which in turn relied on barbarian allies and federates. Criss-crossing lines of political and ethnic demarcation, this relation of dependency dictated the general situation on the northern frontier of the Empire and was ultimately responsible for the spread of an ‘international’ fashion of ‘princely’ burial. This included dress fashions as well, as attested by the generalization of such accessories as silver sheet brooches, later specimens of which are often called ‘Gothic’. Such brooches appear within a vast area of the Continent, stretching from Crimea and the Balkans to Gaul and the Iberian Peninsula. True, here and there the appearance of such brooches coincides in time with the ‘migration of the Goths’, but in many other cases (such as Pannonia, as well as northern and southern Gaul), no such coincidence exists. Instead silver sheet brooches signal a widespread fashion associated with the

⁷⁷ See Michael Schmauder, ‘Imperial Representation or Barbaric Imitation? The Imperial Brooches (*Kaiserfibeln*)’, in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800*, ed. by Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden, 1998), pp. 281–96.

barbarian world on the northern frontiers of the Empire, and are in no way 'Gothic' in and by themselves.⁷⁸

By the mid-400s, so-called 'row grave cemeteries' (*Reihengräberfelder*) have been already established in various parts of Western and Central Europe (Fig. 9).⁷⁹ This is by all means an entirely new phenomenon, which has been given plenty of attention in recent archaeological studies. How could we explain this sudden penchant for uniformity, and what could 'row grave cemeteries' tell us about early medieval societies in northern Gaul or in the Rhineland? Four aspects have been isolated as fundamental for the definition of the *Reihengräberkreis*: inhumation, grave orientation, the deposition of weapons in male burials, and the presence of metal dress accessories in female burials.⁸⁰ These aspects may be seen as Max Weber's *Idealtypus* or as criteria for David Clarke's polythetic classification.⁸¹ Together they give a general idea about such cemeteries, but not all aspects appear in every single case. As a consequence, the *Reihengräberfelder* do not truly form a homogeneous group of cemeteries to be sharply distinguished from others. Especially in Gaul, the southern limits of the row grave cemetery distribution are somewhat blurry. Nevertheless, row grave cemeteries seem to be associated primarily with the north-western periphery of the former empire or with borderlands, mainly on the inner (Roman) side of the former frontier.

The use of inhumation can be explained in various ways. First, it may well be the result of a strong Roman influence. Ever since the second century, inhumation was the predominant form of burial in the western Mediterranean region,⁸² while during the second half of the third century it also became the standard burial form in the north-western provinces of the Empire.⁸³ The production of sarcophagi in Rome stands for a good illustration of this change, in itself the result of a process of 'standardization' throughout the Empire that has little, if anything, to do with the spread of Christianity.⁸⁴ On the other hand, there were also Germanic precedents. Ever since

⁷⁸ Barbara Sasse, 'Westgotische' Gräberfelder auf der Iberischen Halbinsel am Beispiel der Funde aus El Carpio de Tajo (Torrijos, Toledo) (Mainz, 2000); Michel Kazanski, 'La diffusion de la mode danubienne en Gaule (fin du IV^e siècle – début du VI^e siècle): Essai d'interprétation historique', *Antiquités nationales*, 21 (1989), 59–73.

⁷⁹ Guy Halsall, *Early Medieval Cemeteries: An Introduction to Burial Archaeology in the Post-Roman West* (Glasgow, 1995).

⁸⁰ Hubert Fehr 'Germanen und Romanen im Merowingerreich: Frühgeschichtliche Archäologie zwischen Wissenschaft und Zeitgeschichte' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Freiburg, 2003), pp. 624–69.

⁸¹ David L. Clarke, *Analytical Archaeology* (London, 1968), p. 246 fig. 53.

⁸² Inhumations were by far a cheaper solution for disposing of the dead than the *mos romanus*, cremations. See Tacitus, *Annales* 16.6, ed. by Koestermann.

⁸³ See above note 30.

⁸⁴ Morris, *Death-Ritual*.

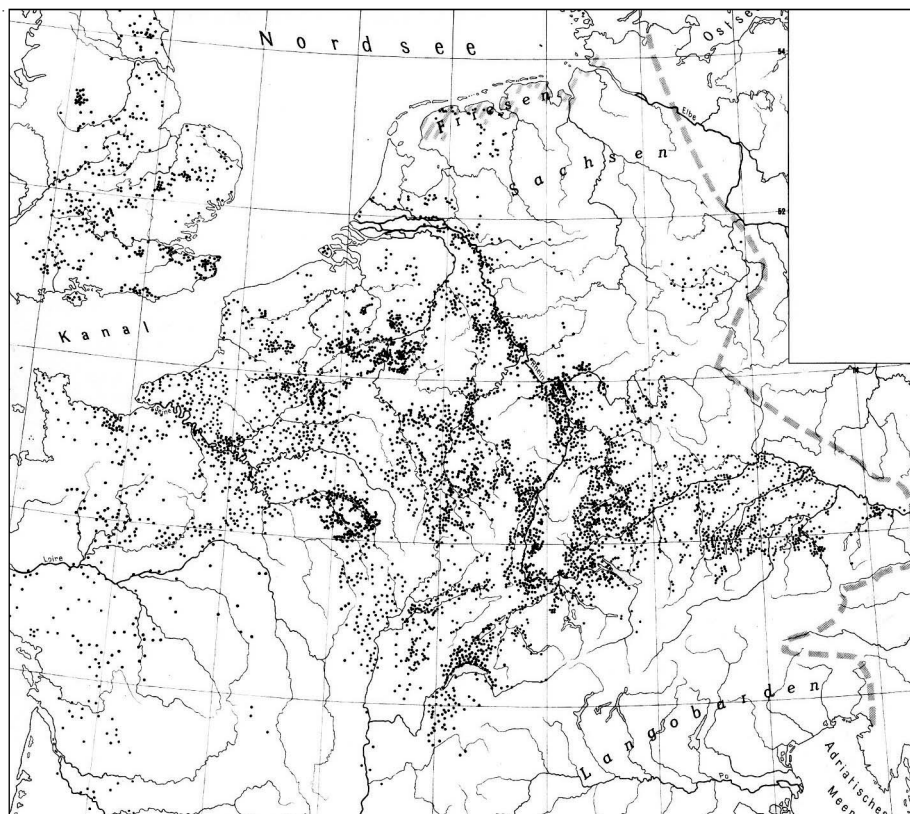


Figure 9. The distribution of fifth- to seventh-century row grave cemeteries in north-western and central Europe. Not shown are sixth-century *Reihengräber* in Hungary and Transylvania. The broken line marks the approximate frontier between Germanic and Slavic settlement areas during the eighth and ninth centuries. Source: Joachim Werner, 'Verbreitung der Reihengräberfelder im 7. Jh', in *Großer Historischer Weltatlas*, vol. II: *Mittelalter*, ed. by Josef Enge, 2nd edn (Munich, 1979), map 8.

the first century, a few chiefs were given special burials in order to distinguish them from the rest of the population: instead of cremation, the bodies of these members of the elite were laid in grave pits. As shown above, the use of inhumation pre-dates any evidence of direct Roman influence, despite the fact that many associated grave goods are Roman 'imports'. Most likely, inhumation was primarily a marker of social status.⁸⁵ Both traditions may have been at work in the case of later chief graves of the so-called Haßleben-Leuna group. The very existence of biritual

⁸⁵ Steuer, 'Fürstengräber der römischen Kaiserzeit', p. 386.

cemeteries (with both inhumation and cremation graves) is an example of adaptation to Roman customs.⁸⁶ In sum, the Roman influence became stronger especially during the fourth century.

The west–east grave orientation (with the head of the deceased to the west) is in fact no novelty in the fifth century. There have been numerous examples in the fourth century, when a change from the north–south orientation can first be noted. Until the sixth century, the west–east orientation prevailed over the north–south one. There are also cases where the change from one grave orientation to the other can be observed within the same multiphase cemetery (Krefeld-Gellep, St-Martin-de-Fontenay, Bulles). In other cases, the new orientation was adopted when a new cemetery opened at a different location (Rhenen, Vron, Frénouville). The phenomenon occurs in all contemporary cemeteries, regardless of the attached ethnic label (Roman or Germanic). The west–east orientation is commonly interpreted as the reflection of Christian ideas, but elsewhere the phenomenon antedates conversion or even the rise of Christianity.⁸⁷

By contrast, the deposition of weapons in burials is often viewed as a Germanic custom, a key argument for those who declared the row grave cemeteries in northern Gaul to be the burial grounds of Germanic *laeti* or federates. But no clear-cut traditions of weapon deposition can be followed back in time to support such ideas. Horst Wolfgang Böhme has therefore proposed that burials with weapons be seen as a reaction of the Germanic newcomers to the hostility of the environment in which they confronted Roman power.⁸⁸ Mechthild Schulze-Dörlamm has argued that the practice signalled the presence on the Rhine of soldiers of east Germanic origin,⁸⁹ but all known examples of burials with swords are inhumations, very different in that respect from late third- to mid-fourth-century burials with weapons between the Elbe and Vistula rivers, all of which are cremations.⁹⁰ The small number of cases and the rather heterogeneous combination of weapon types make it difficult, if not impossible, to draw any conclusive parallels. Even within the area of the so-called Przeworsk culture, from which the practice of weapon deposition is believed to have originated, such burials are not very numerous. In both areas, the Roman West and the Germanic East, one is forced to explain away such exceptions from the ‘rule’ that states that male burials were normally not furnished with any weapons. As a consequence,

⁸⁶ Jörg Kleemann, ‘Zum Aufkommen der Körperbestattung in Niedersachsen’, *Studien zur Sachsenforschung*, 13 (1999), 253–62, here p. 259.

⁸⁷ Martin Wallraff, *Christus versus sol: Sonnenverehrung und Christentum in der Spätantike* (Münster, 2001).

⁸⁸ Böhme, *Germanische Grabfunde*, p. 190.

⁸⁹ Mechthild Schulze-Dörlamm, ‘Germanische Kriegergräber mit Schwertbeigabe in Mitteleuropa aus dem späten 3. und der ersten Hälfte des 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. Zur Entstehung der Waffenbeigabensitte in Gallien’, *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums*, 32 (1985), 509–69.

⁹⁰ Schulze-Dörlamm, ‘Germanische Kriegergräber’, p. 551.

in the West the phenomenon may well be an innovation of the Roman periphery. This idea is substantiated by the fact that besides a few swords discussed by Schulze-Dörlamm, most burials with weapons in northern Gaul produced primarily axes, always found singly.⁹¹ Germanic soldiers in the Roman army may be responsible for the introduction of this type of burial, which was meant to represent their martial posture. However, Guy Halsall has rejected the idea of *Germanic* soldiers, as most weapons were of Roman origin, and could thus have been carried by both Romans and Germans. The regions included within the Empire produced several examples of ritual deposition of weapons in rivers, which points to a specifically Roman preoccupation with weapon symbolism. Moreover, the association of weapons with other pieces of Roman military equipment (such as belt fittings or fibulae) strongly suggest that these were burials of Roman military, and there were demonstrably more Romans in the army than Germans.⁹² In addition to interpretations stressing the military aspect of the practice of weapon deposition, we need to take into account that such burials marked a sharp change in status representation and, possibly, a new *habitus*. Much like contemporary female burials with dress accessories, male burials with weapons seem to have been used to mark social status in a changed environment and to have done so through some special ritual. It is no accident that all burials with weapons appear on the periphery of fifth- and sixth-century political entities. Indeed, such burials are absent from the central region under the control of the Merovingian kings, for example, from Picardie and western Belgium. No weapons were deposited in graves found around Trèves and in the Moselle region, in Burgundy and south-eastern Gaul, all areas in which Roman structures survived longer (Fig. 10). This distribution indicates that in those areas in which weapons do appear in burial assemblages, local elites may have attempted to demonstrate and consolidate social status in a particularly volatile political environment.⁹³ This was the environment of peripheral areas of Merovingian Gaul, but the details of the ritual in use there for the representation of social status remains largely unknown.

Contemporary female burials produced a large quantity of metal dress accessories. Most common are fibulae and belt fittings, two artefact categories on which all interpretations of gender or age identity, social status and ethnicity are based.

⁹¹ Böhme, *Germanische Grabfunde*, p. 164.

⁹² Guy Halsall, 'Archaeology and the Late Roman Frontier in Northern Gaul: The So-called "Föderatengräber" Reconsidered', in *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Vienna, 2000), pp. 167–80. See also Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, p. 271.

⁹³ Frans Theuws and Monica Alkemade, 'A Kind of Mirror for Men: Sword Depositions in Late Antique Northern Gaul', in *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Frans Theuws and Janet L. Nelson (Leiden, 2000), pp. 401–76. For the volatile political configurations in peripheral areas of Gaul, see Bernhard Jussen, 'Über "Bischöfsherrschaften" und die Prozeduren politisch-sozialer Umordnung in Gallien zwischen "Antike" und "Mittelalter"', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 260 (1995), 673–718.

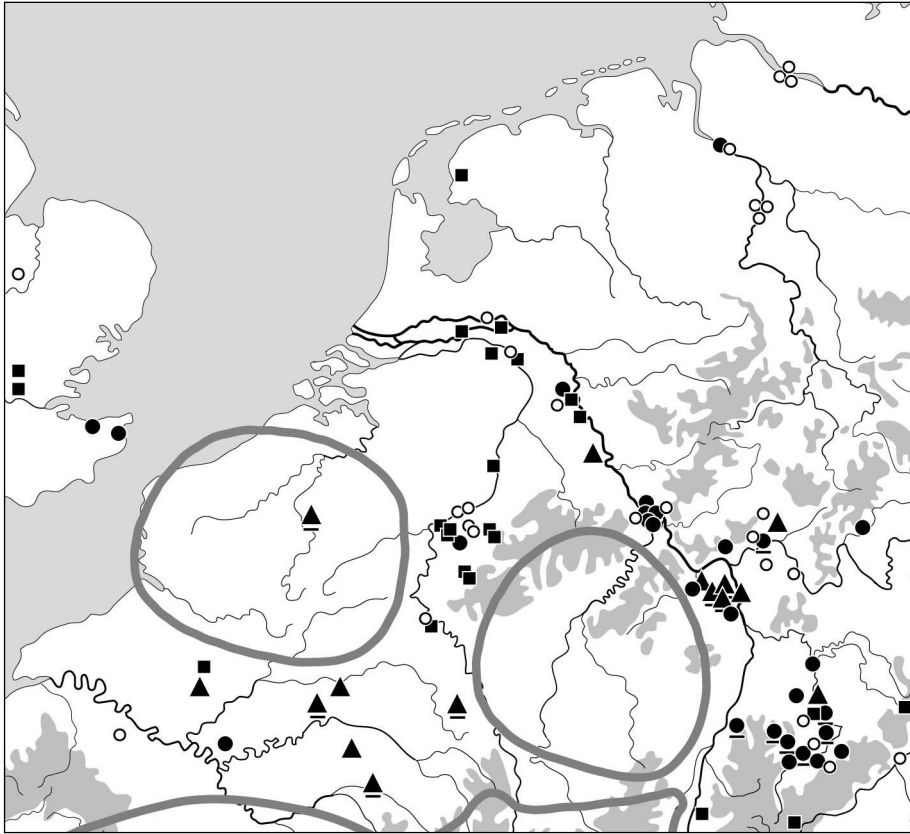


Figure 10. Distribution of late fifth- and early sixth-century sword finds in northern Gaul: garnet-decorated swords or scabbards (triangle); 'Alamannic' scabbards (full circle); scabbards of the Krefeld type (square); swords with gold-decorated hilts (underlined symbol); other finds (circle). Highlighted with bold black line are regions that produced evidence of settlement, but no (or very few) sword finds. Map redrawn by the author after Theuvs and Alkemade, 'A Kind of Mirror for Men', p. 462 fig. 10.

Throughout the imperial age, the standard female apparel in *Germania* was a *peplos*-like dress attached with two fibulae on the shoulders. Such a dress is also known from the western provinces. The apparel also included a coat or cape, which during the fifth century was closed at the front with two other, smaller fibulae, perhaps an adaptation of male dress fashions. By 600, only one fibula was used to close the cape, while the fibulae initially attached to the *peplos* (now perhaps used with stitched shoulders) completely lost their function and were used as pure ornament, either attached to the belt or in a sash, as they were often found near the abdomen or

on the pelvis of the associated skeletons. Especially during the sixth century, fibulae were attached to a long strap hanging from the belt, a fashion that probably imitated contemporary *cingulae*.⁹⁴ Typically late fifth- and sixth-century brooches display a combination of Roman and Germanic forms and ornament patterns.⁹⁵ The fifth century was indeed a period of radical changes in female dress fashions and these changes had multiple sources of inspiration. Burial in the jewelled dress was a female equivalent to the deposition of weapons in male burials: 'weapons were the uniform [of soldiers]. Fibulae and buckles indicated rank.'⁹⁶ The latter appear in borderlands, but only rarely near such Merovingian power centres as Metz,⁹⁷ with the exception of Cologne.⁹⁸

The emergence of the row grave cemeteries in the mid-400s was the result of the inception of a specifically militarized culture of the northern borderlands of the Roman world. There were certainly cultural traditions in those areas, but they had been transformed and readapted in such a way that no distinction allowed any more the separation of 'Germanic' from 'Roman'. However, during the fifth century, traditional references to Rome and the cultural ideals of the senatorial class did not make much sense any more. With the increased regionalization of power in Late Antiquity, the elites in the north-western borderlands needed new forms of expression and new ways to represent social status. Richly furnished burials may well have been a symptom of this cultural change, one that responded to the need for representation of status within smaller political entities by means of burial rituals involving even smaller, local communities.⁹⁹ Burial was now a public ceremony that could bolster or consolidate the elite's power and stand. The fifth-century world of the borderlands was not one dominated by 'ancient Germans', but by a mixture of (Gallo-)Roman and Germanic military elements. In this sense, the new centres of power were not Germanic 'successor states' established within the ruins of the Roman Empire, but a

⁹⁴ Max Martin, 'Tradition und Wandel der fibelgeschmückten frühmittelalterlichen Frauenkleidung', *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums*, 38 (1991), 629–80; and 'Zur frühmittelalterlichen Gürteltracht der Frau in der Burgundia, Francia und Aquitania', in *L'art des invasions en Hongrie et en Wallonie: Actes du colloque tenu au Musée royal de Mariemont du 9 au 11 avril 1979*, ed. by Guy Donnay (Mariemont, 1991), pp. 31–84.

⁹⁵ Mechthild Schulze-Dörlamm, 'Germanische Spiralplattenfibeln oder romanische Bügelfibeln? Zu den Vorbildern elbgermanisch-fränkischer Bügelfibeln der vormerowingischen Zeit', *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt*, 30 (2000), 599–613.

⁹⁶ Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 341.

⁹⁷ Guy Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization: The Merovingian Region of Metz* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 107–08 and fig. 3.23–3.24; p. 260.

⁹⁸ Steuer, 'Archäologie und germanische Sozialgeschichte', p. 28.

⁹⁹ Guy Halsall, 'The Origins of the *Reihengräberzivilisation*: Forty Years On', in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?*, ed. by John F. Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 196–207.

reorganization of older administrative structures. Besides weapons, buckles, and fibulae, food and drink also played an important role as grave goods. In many ways, feasting created community and expressed status.¹⁰⁰ Beginning with the late seventh century, the Church gained more influence on the burying of the dead. The importance of the liturgy for the dead increased, and with such changes the representation of status also changed. Instead of rich grave goods, the new markers of social identity were now epitaphs and donations to the clergy, to bishops or monasteries.¹⁰¹ Grave goods lost their function and gradually disappeared. After c. 700, the only artefacts found in burials are those that allow no deeper insight into social structures. The increasing Christianization of society was no more than a secondary factor in this change.¹⁰²

Conclusion

The archaeological evidence from *barbaricum* shows traces of a remarkable Roman influence. Before an interpretation of this evidence is offered, it is important to remember the angle chosen to examine it. I chose to look at the material culture in barbarian lands to the detriment of the archaeological evidence from the western provinces of the Empire, otherwise impressive in both quantity and quality. Nonetheless, artefacts of Roman or Mediterranean origin are easy to distinguish in the archaeological assemblages from *Germania magna*.

Thus, the archaeological record indicates a strong Roman impact on the region during the imperial age. 'Imports' point to intensive contacts between the Empire and its neighbours on the north-western frontier. But such foreign goods did not remain foreign for too long, for they were integrated into the world of the barbarians and were adapted to their material culture needs. For instance, the chip-carved decoration (*Kerbschnitt*) of Roman military belt fittings was changed into the ornamental technique employed for fibulae and wooden furniture. Wheel-made pottery was not only imported from the Roman Empire, but also produced and distributed within *Germania*. Finally, casting moulds for jewellery or dress accessories indicate that various objects until now believed to be 'imports' were in fact 'made-in-Germania'.

¹⁰⁰ Bonnie Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul* (New York, 2002), pp. 69–91.

¹⁰¹ Bonnie Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World* (University Park, 2002).

¹⁰² During the Middle Ages, bishops and kings continued to be buried in rich clothing with all symbols of office, power, and status. See Thomas Meier, *Die Archäologie des mittelalterlichen Königsgrabes im christlichen Europa* (Stuttgart, 2002); Bernd Päffgen, 'Die Speyerer Bischofsgräber und ihre vergleichende Einordnung: Eine archäologische Studie zu Bischofsgräbern in Deutschland von den frühchristlichen Anfängen bis zum Ende des Ancien Régime' (unpublished habilitation, Bonn, 2001).

Roman 'imports' in chief graves of the first three centuries AD were carefully selected. Specific artefacts seem to have been preferred for burial deposition. Through this selection of artefacts of 'foreign' origin, the barbarian elite represented itself to others in a display of social status symbols. Roman lifestyles thus contributed to the reproduction of the barbarian elite's *habitus*. As a consequence, permanent contact with the Roman world or at least with some of its prominent representatives was of paramount importance for Germanic chiefs: without it, they could easily and rapidly lose face and power. Moreover, the distribution of 'imports' and chief graves suggests that such contacts were of greater importance for leaders at a considerable distance from the frontier than for those immediately north and east of that. Obviously, the Roman influence reached very far and may in itself point to political mechanisms whereby barbarian leaders, either members of tribal aristocracies or informants, were alternately chosen as 'partners' or abandoned for better allies. Since the balance of power shifted frequently, the political situation of the barbarian chiefs may also have changed rapidly. In the long run, this may well have resulted in the disappearance of many 'ethnic' names, quickly replaced by others. Neither Germans as a whole, nor entire tribes (*gentes*) could be viewed as enemies of Rome, since Germanic soldiers in the Roman army are to be found in almost every military confrontation at that time. Instead, Roman troubles began with ever-changing Germanic groups in Roman service and with shifting alliances of impermanent nature.

The barbarian dependency interpretation suggested above is of course just one side of the picture. Barbarians played an active role in both confrontation and cooperation with the Empire. According to Peter Wells, the revival, during the first and second centuries, of certain La Tène stylistic features may well reflect 'nativist' strategies, which were intended to strengthen regional identities.¹⁰³ By the same token, bracteates and the early medieval animal style seem to have been developed in response to a new demand for identity markers in barbarian culture, much like the chip-carved ornament of the fourth century. The exact meaning attached to such stylistic choices remains unknown, but Roman origins have been clearly demonstrated in both cases.

Roman goods, such as coins, bronze artefacts, glassware, or *terra sigillata*, have also been found in contemporary Germanic settlements, but they are very different from the artefacts chosen for deposition in chief graves. This may indicate that, unlike their leaders, commoners in barbarian societies did not have much access to, or interest in, Roman contacts. Indeed, cremation burials in contemporary cemeteries are in sharp contrast to the small number of splendidly furnished inhumations. This difference, however, is to be interpreted more in terms of the exclusive position of power that elites enjoyed at that time than as their explicit and exclusive orientation to Rome. Steuer has described Germanic chiefs as crossing borders in more than one

¹⁰³ Peter S. Wells, *The Barbarians Speak: How the Conquered Peoples Shaped Roman Europe* (Princeton, 1999), pp. 196–98. Even the revolt of the *Batavi* AD 69/70 can be seen as a 'nativist' reaction. See Roymans, *Romeinse frontierpolitiek*.

way: they often crossed not just the 'real' border (*limes*), but also the cultural one between civilized Romans and barbarians.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, Rome had a key role in the political and ethnic configuration of *Germania*. Roman interference fostered, induced, and interrupted processes of ethnic formation reflected in the many and ever-changing ethnic names. Isolated chief graves suggest the existence of a ranked society with unstable, shifting structures that posed so many problems to Roman insistent attempts to control it.

By the mid-400s, at the latest, the traditional dichotomy of Romans vs. Germans has lost its meaning. The contrast between Romans and barbarians remained a theme of literary discourse, but on the ground developments have moved into a different direction. A 'frontier culture' had meanwhile appeared in the peripheral region of northern Gaul and along the Rhine. The dissolving imperial power compelled the elites of the Empire to look for new forms of power representation. By now, regional and local societies were the only basis and audience available for status demonstration. One avenue for the display of status symbols and claims to power was burial ceremonies. Whether various elements of the *Reihengräberkreis* were of Roman or Germanic origin is irrelevant in this respect, since most 'traditions' are difficult to identify. What mattered were their combination and the resulting *new* culture.

The 'mixture' of people of different cultural or 'ethnic' backgrounds (Gallic, Roman, and Germanic) had an impact on all spheres of everyday life. The terms 'Roman' and 'Germanic' now described, at best, juridical but not ethnic oppositions, and within a few decades even such differences disappeared. The 'Germanic successor states' witnessed a broad participation of members of the former 'senatorial' elite, especially in Gaul, Italy, and Spain. The new political configuration was the framework for new processes of ethnic formation. *Alamanni*, Bavarians, and other new *gentes* thus made their appearance within the Frankish kingdoms.¹⁰⁵

Geary's remark cited at the beginning of this paper highlights the role of Roman politics in the transformation of the late antique world. There can be no doubt that without the neighbouring Empire, the Germanic *barbaricum* would have been very different, although the degree of difference is only a matter of speculation. What is left out in this interpretation is the role of the ancient Germans themselves. They were not just an object of Roman politics and military campaigns, but actively pursued their own goals and interests. Barbarian chiefs and military leaders deliberately chose to imitate Roman lifestyles, and Roman luxury became an ideal of Germanic *habitus*. If gifts and exchange were not sufficient for the procurement of such goods, there was always the possibility of marauding raids. Different Germanic groups were integrated into the Roman world at different times, and not just for the purpose of recruiting soldiers for the imperial army. The resulting 'frontier culture' of the fourth and fifth centuries represented the new social aspirations of Romano-Germanic

¹⁰⁴ Steuer, 'Fürstengräber der römischen Kaiserzeit'.

¹⁰⁵ Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450–751* (London, 1994).

societies. Such a process of interaction and conflict can easily be labelled ‘acculturation’, but the social and cultural realities seem to have been much more complex. There were no homogeneous groups on either side to blend in the new ‘melting pot’, nor is there any point zero from which interactions began to bear cultural and political consequences. While the archaeological evidence reflects cultural, economic, and social situations and relations, literary sources describe political and ethnic developments.¹⁰⁶ Frequently changing names of newly emerging groups were the result of frontier ethnogenetic processes.

¹⁰⁶ For the latter, see Walter Pohl, *Die Völkerwanderung: Eroberung und Integration* (Stuttgart, 2002).

Frontier Ethnogenesis in Late Antiquity: The Danube, the Tervingi, and the Slavs

FLORIN CURTA

The idea of making the Lower Danube the frontier of the Roman Empire dates back to Julius Caesar. The natural and military borders complemented each other to form an intricate matrix of Roman self-definition. In the mid-500s, Procopius viewed the Danube as the ‘strongest possible line of first defense’ against barbarians, *probolon ischyrotaton*.¹ Procopius witnessed an increasing differentiation between political and administrative frontiers, on the one hand, and cultural boundaries, on the other. Long before the sixth century, the *limes* has ceased to be a purely military zone and has become an area of contact and exchange with populations living on the left bank of the Danube. Some have argued that its main purpose was now that of a buffer zone, specifically designed to divert and to slow down if not to stop the invasions of the Slavs.² Others believe that the Roman frontier was never

¹ Procopius, *Buildings* 4.1.33, ed. by J. Haury, trans. by H. B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA, 1940), p. 229.

² Enrico Zanini, ‘Confine e frontiera: il limes danubiano nel VI secolo’, in *MILION: Studi e ricerche d’arte bizantina* (Rome, 1988), pp. 257–71; P. V. Shuvalov, ‘Severo-vostok Balkanskogo poluostrova v epokhu pozdnei antichnosti (social’no-demograficheskie aspekty politicheskoi istorii)’, in *Iz istorii Vizantii i vizantinovedeniia: Mezhdvuzovski sbornik*, ed. by G. L. Kurbatov (Leningrad, 1991), pp. 39–47. See also Radu Florescu, ‘Limesul dunărean în perioada târzie a Imperiului roman’, *Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice*, 41 (1972), 23–26; Sofia Patoura-Hatzopoulos, ‘L’oeuvre de reconstitution du limes danubien à l’époque de l’empereur Justinien I-er (territoire roumain)’, *Revue des études sud-est-européennes*, 18 (1980), 95–109; S. A. Ivanov, ‘Oborona Vizantii i geografiia “varvaskikh” vtorzhenii cherez Dunai v pervoi polovine VI v.’, *Vizantiiskii Vremennik*, 44 (1983), 27–47; G. A. Mansuelli, ‘Il limes bassodanubiano in età tardoantica’, *Ratiariensia*, 2 (1984), 13–36; Velizar Velkov, ‘Der Donaulimes in Bulgarien und das Vordringen der Slawen’, in *Die Völker Südosteuropas im 6. bis 8. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Bernhard Hänsel (Berlin, 1987), pp. 141–69; Miloje Vašić, ‘Le

intended to be a preclusive perimeter defence, but a deep zone that included the *limes* itself, the supporting provinces, and in some cases, even the territories across the frontier.³ Denys Pringle's research on the African *limes* revealed a hierarchy of forts with various functions, operating on different levels in a sophisticated system of in-depth defence.⁴ The situation in the Balkans is equally instructive. According to Procopius, Justinian built or renewed more than six hundred forts in the region, eight times more than in the entire Asian part of the Empire. Moreover, recent excavations reveal that a number of then modern and sophisticated building techniques, such as hexagonal bastions, so dear to the author of the sixth-century *De Re Strategica*, were widely prevalent in the building defences on the Danube frontier or in the interior.⁵ To Procopius, writing shortly after the completion of this program of fortification, the Danube, when getting 'close to Dacia, for the first time clearly forms the boundary between the barbarians, who hold its left bank, and the territory of the Romans, which is on the right'.⁶

However, an almost exclusive emphasis on the Roman side of the story obscures the equally important question of the Roman influence upon barbarians on the other side of the fortified frontier. Historians of the early Middle Ages have only recently developed an interest in the political manipulation of cultural difference across state

limes protobyzantin dans la province de Mésie Première', *Starinar*, 45–46 (1994–95), 41–53; Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500–700* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 150–89.

³ Benjamin Isaac, *The Limits of the Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (Oxford, 1992); C. R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore, 1994). For the meaning of *limes*, see Benjamin Isaac, 'The Meaning of the Terms *Limes* and *Limitanei*', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 78 (1988), 125–47. See also Evangelos Chrysos, 'Die Nordgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches im 6. bis 8. Jahrhundert', in *Die Völker Südosteuropas*, ed. by Hänsel, pp. 27–40; David Harry Miller, 'Frontier Societies and the Transition between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages', in *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Ralph W. Mathisen and Hagith S. Sivan (Aldershot, 1996), p. 162.

⁴ Denys Pringle, *The Defense of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest: An Account of the Military History and Archaeology of the African Provinces in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries* (Oxford, 1981).

⁵ *De Re Strategica* 12, ed. by G. T. Dennis (Washington, 1985), p. 35. For building techniques, see Dimităr Ovcharov, 'Proteikhizmata v sistemata na rannovizantiiskite ukreplenii po nashite zemi', *Arkheologiya*, 15 (1973), 11–23, and 'Observations sur le système de fortifications de la haute époque byzantine dans les terres bulgares d'aujourd'hui durant les 5–6-es siècles', in *Limes: Akten des 11. internationalen Limeskongresses Székesfehérvár 30.8.–6.9.1976*, ed. by J. Fitz (Budapest, 1977), p. 469; Małgorzata Biernacka-Lubańska, *The Roman and Early Byzantine Fortifications of Lower Moesia and Northern Thrace* (Wrocław, 1982), pp. 219–20.

⁶ Procopius, *Buildings* 4.5, ed. by Haury, trans. by Dewing, p. 267.

frontiers.⁷ Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this new direction of research is the emphasis on political frontiers as crucial for the *creation*, rather than *separation*, of ethnic configurations. With a considerable amount of new data now available, old questions can now be rephrased in order to address issues of ethnogenesis. What is the significance of excavated forts and fortifications for the new interpretation of the Roman frontier on the Lower Danube? What were the implications of the contacts established across this frontier for processes of ethnic formation? Can the process of cultural polarization, so typically associated with the creation of ethnic boundaries, be identified in the surviving material and documentary evidence of the frontier region in the northern Balkans? My purpose in this essay is to find plausible answers to these questions by means of a comparative analysis of the Lower Danube frontier in the fourth and sixth century, respectively. I will argue that aggressive policies implemented in the region by various emperors, from Constantine the Great to Justinian, sometimes accompanied by the economic 'closure' of the frontier, had dramatic consequences for the level of social competition within communities beyond the *limes* and encouraged the rise of leaders whose basis of power was warfare.⁸ This, in turn, implied access to prestige goods and the invention of 'emblemic styles'⁹ of material culture, which may have represented some form of group identity. I will first examine problems of chronology and emphasize the correlation between Roman

⁷ Willem J. H. Willems, 'Rome and its Frontier in the North: The Role of the Periphery', in *The Birth of Europe: Archaeology and Social Development in the First Millennium A.D.*, ed. by Klavs Randsborg (Rome, 1989), pp. 33–45; David Chappell, 'Ethnogenesis and Frontiers', *Journal of World History*, 4 (1993), 267–75; David Harry Miller, 'Ethnogenesis and Religious Revitalization beyond the Roman Frontier: The Case of Frankish Origins', *Journal of World History*, 4 (1993), 277–85; David Olster, 'From Periphery to Centre: The Transformation of Late Roman Self-Definition in the Seventh Century', in *Shifting Frontiers*, ed. by Mathisen and Sivan, pp. 93–101; Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, pp. 335–50.

⁸ For the association between warfare and ethnogenesis, see Brent Shaw, 'War and Violence', in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. by G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, 1999), p. 160.

⁹ See Polly Wiessner, 'Style and Social Information in Kalahari San Projectile Points', *American Antiquity*, 48 (1983), 253–76; 'Style or Isochrestic Variation? A Reply to Sackett', *American Antiquity*, 50 (1985), 160–66; and 'Is There a Unity to Style?', in *The Uses of Style in Archaeology*, ed. by Margaret W. Conkey and Christine A. Hastorf (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 105–12. For style as a form of communication, see H. M. Wobst, 'Stylistic Behavior and Information Exchange', in *For the Director: Research Essays in Honor of James B. Griffin*, ed. by C. E. Cleland (Ann Arbor, 1977), pp. 317–42; Michelle Hegmon, 'Archaeological Research on Style', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 21 (1992), 517–36. For style and ethnicity, see Nicholas David, Judy Sterner, and Kodzo Gavua, 'Why Pots Are Decorated', *Current Anthropology*, 29 (1988), 365–89; Michell Hegmon, 'Boundary-Making Strategies in Early Pueblo Societies: Style and Architecture in the Kayenta and Mesa Verde Regions', in *The Ancient Southwestern Community: Models and Methods for the Study of Prehistoric Social Organization*, ed. by W. H. Wills and Robert D. Leonard (Albuquerque, 1994), pp. 171–90.

fortification initiatives and military campaigns across the Danube, on the one hand, and the 'native' reaction on the other. I will then focus on the economic dimension of the *limes* and attempt to delineate the mechanisms by which Roman prestige goods were acquired and manipulated by elites north of the Danube. My purpose is to raise the question of how the Roman frontier culture was incorporated into the 'native' representation of power. I will eventually attempt to explain the rise of such ethnic groups as Tervingi and Sclavenes in terms of both dissemination of 'emblemic styles' and the emergence of new forms of political power. Big-men and chiefs, 'judges' and 'kings' became prominent especially in contexts in which they embodied collective interest and responsibility. Such leaders 'created' groups by speaking and taking action in the name of their respective communities. Political and military mobilization was the response to the historical conditions created by the implementation of the 'strongest possible line of first defense' along the Lower Danube frontier. As the politicization of cultural difference is one of the most important elements in the anthropological definition of ethnicity, the group identity represented by 'emblemic styles' was goal-oriented, triggered by mechanisms of internal mobilization and propelled by a relatively long period of external pressure. Repeated production and consumption of distinctive styles of material culture may have indeed represented ethnic identity.

Tervingi and Sclavenes on the Lower Danube

At the time they made their appearance in historical sources, the Tervingi were already on the political agenda of the Tetrarchic emperors. The first mention is of 291, as a Roman orator referred to Tervingian and Taifalian warriors allied in battle against a Vandal-Gepid coalition.¹⁰ It is often assumed that, as such, the Tervingi must have been the direct descendants of a Gothic group defeated by Emperor Aurelian after his campaign of 271 north of the Danube. Following the abandonment of Dacia by the Roman army and administration, the Goths and the Taifali had then occupied the territory and, in the process, had eliminated local competitors, such as the Bastarni (the survivors being moved to Thrace in 280 by Emperor Probus) and the Carpi (subsequently defeated by Emperor Galerius and also settled south of the Danube).¹¹

¹⁰ *Genethliacus of Maximian Augustus* 17.1, ed. by C. E. V. Nixon and B. S. Rodgers (Berkeley, 1994), pp. 541 and 100 with n. 82. Eutropius's description of the former Roman province of Dacia as possessed by Taifali, Victuali, and Tervingi (*Breviarium de urbe condita* VIII 2.2, ed. by Carlo Santini (Leipzig, 1979)) may refer to the situation shortly after 300.

¹¹ Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 56–57; Peter Heather, 'The Late Roman Art of Client Management: Imperial Defense in the Fourth Century West', in *The Transformation of Frontiers: From Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. by Walter Pohl, Ian Wood, and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden, 2001), p. 21. Scholars have long assumed that the Goths had immediately invaded Dacia after its abandonment in 271 or 275. Recent studies have

Aurelian's campaign may be viewed as a punitive counter-offensive, in response to the events of 270, when the Goths sacked Anchialos and Nicopolis, two cities in the eastern and northern Balkans, respectively.¹² Since much of what is known about Aurelian's campaign and the subsequent triumphal celebration of 274 comes from the *Historia Augusta*, it remains unclear how much of that is in fact the result of the ingrained 'anti-Gothic' bias that has much more to do with political events of the late 300s and early 400s, and especially with the episode of Gainas (400).¹³ Nonetheless, the memory of Aurelian's aggressive policies towards barbarians on the other side of the Danube frontier was not preserved in historical writings alone. There is considerable archaeological evidence post-dating his reign and showing an increased political interest in developments on the Lower Danube frontier of the Empire. Between 280 and 320, a massive and steady building activity on that frontier aimed at maintaining and augmenting already existing structures of defence, in addition to supplementing the system with new fortifications. Large auxiliary forts, such as those of Augustae/Khârlec or Oescus/Gigen (Bulgaria), were enlarged to accommodate more troops.¹⁴ Others, such as Iatrus/Krivina (Bulgaria) were built anew with powerful U-shaped

shown, however, that much of the former province of Dacia remained outside the Tervingian settlement area. See Evangelos Chrysos, 'Von der Räumung der Dacia Traiana zur Entstehung der Gothia', *Bonner Jahrbücher*, 192 (1992), 175–93; Michael Schmauder, 'Verzögerte Landnahmen? Die Dacia Traiana und die sogenannten "Decumates agri"', in *Integration und Herrschaft: Ethnische Identitäten und soziale Organisation im Frühmittelalter*, ed. by Walter Pohl and Maximilian Diesenberger (Vienna, 2002), pp. 185–215, here pp. 185–91.

¹² Peter Heather, *The Goths* (Oxford, 1996), p. 41. The 'anti-Gothic' bias of the *Historia Augusta* is evident in the account of the ten Gothic women walking in the triumphal procession of 274 as Amazons. They were allegedly survivors of an entire division of women who fought against the Romans alongside their menfolk and were captured in battle. See Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 400 with n. 104.

¹³ Heather, *Goths*, pp. 144 and 146.

¹⁴ Rumen Ivanov, 'Der Limes von Dorticum bis Durostorum (1.–6. Jh.): Bauperioden des Befestigungssystems und archäologische Ergebnisse, 1980–1995', in *Roman Limes on the Middle and Lower Danube*, ed. by Petar Petrović (Belgrade, 1996), pp. 166–68. For the late third-century fortification phase at Augustae and Oescus, see also Rumen Ivanov, 'Das römische Verteidigungssystem an der unteren Donau zwischen Dorticum und Durostorum (Bulgarien) von Augustus bis Maurikios', *Bericht der römisch-germanischen Kommission*, 78 (1997), 544–48 and 551–54. Augusta/Transmarisca/Tutrakan, Sexaginta Prista/Russenski Lom, and Durostorum/Silistra received new fortifications in 298/9, as attested by inscriptions. Brick stamps found on the site indicate that Transmarisca was the garrison fort of the eleventh legion Claudia. See Tadeusz Sarnowski, 'Die Anfänge der spätromischen Militärorganisation des unteren Donauraumes', in *Akten des 14. internationalen Limeskongresses 1986 in Carnuntum*, ed. by H. Vetters and M. Kandler (Vienna, 1990), pp. 855–74; Emil Petkov, 'Le rôle de Transmarisca dans le limes de Bas-Danube', in *Der Limes an der unteren Donau von Diokletian bis Heraklios: Vorträge der internationalen Konferenz, Svištov, Bulgarien (1.–5. September 1998)*, ed. by Gerda von Bülow and Alexandra Milcheva (Sofia, 1999), pp. 237–43.

towers along the walls.¹⁵ But the hallmark of this building activity is a new type of fort known as *quadriburgium*, which was introduced from the Eastern frontier. *Quadriburgia* are of a typically small size (under 1 ha) and of rectangular or square form with four towers at the corners. The idea behind the use of such fortlets seems to have been that of a more flexible strategy of rapid intervention. They were built on advanced positions, either on promontories, overlooking the Danube, on the bank itself, or at points of special significance for the control of the left bank. More important for the purpose of this essay is the fact that such fortlets also appear as bridgeheads on the northern bank of the river (Orşova Veche, Hinova, Puținei, Izvorul Frumos, and Desa).¹⁶ *Quadriburgia* were intended to serve as bases for small military units of *exploratores* (scouting units of infantry or cavalry troops) used to patrol along the river or for rapid intervention north of the Danube. Both *quadriburgia* and *exploratores* served their purpose well in 323, when Constantine organized an expedition across the Danube, in order to punish a Tervingian raid taking advantage of Licinius's withdrawal of troops from the 'Gothic bank'.¹⁷ Five years later, Constantine added to the pressure by opening the stone bridge across the Danube between Oescus/Gigen (Bulgaria) and Sucidava/Celei (Romania).¹⁸ Another *quadriburgium* was built on the left bank, at Daphne, just across from Transmarisca/Tutrakan (Bulgaria).¹⁹ Constantine's son and Caesar in the West, Constantine II, led a third intervention across the Danube, no doubt using the newly established bridge and bridgehead. The attack took place in 332, at a time the Tervingi were already engaged in military conflict with their Sarmatian neighbours. As a consequence, they were utterly defeated and quickly demanded peace. As a condition for that, Constantine demanded that the son of the Tervingian 'judge' be sent to Constantinople as hostage.²⁰ The peace treaty of

¹⁵ B. Döhle, 'Zur spätromischen Militärarchitektur: Das Limeskastell Iatrus (Moesia Secunda)', *Archeologia*, 40 (1989), 50–65. Iatrus was built between 315 and 317.

¹⁶ Mihail Zahariade, 'The Tetrarchic Building Activity at the Lower Danube. I: Quadriburgia', in *Der Limes an der unteren Donau*, ed. by von Bülow and Milcheva, pp. 3 and 5.

¹⁷ Anonymus Valesianus, *Excerpta Valesiana* 35, ed. by Jacques Moreau (Leipzig, 1961). The Tervingi were on Licinius's side during his conflict with Constantine and at one point the defeated Licinius seems to have planned to escape to his allies. See Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 60. For the 'Gothic bank', see Evangelos Chrysos, '*Ripa Gothica* and *Litus Saxonicum*', in *Transformation of Frontiers*, ed. by Pohl, Wood, and Reimitz, pp. 69–72.

¹⁸ Ivanov, 'Das römische Verteidigungssystem', pp. 612 and 613 fig. 56.

¹⁹ A. Aricescu, *Armata în Dobrogea romană* (Bucharest, 1977), pp. 164–65. Daphne has not yet been identified, but there can be no doubt that it was on the left bank, for the fort is said to have been linked to Transmarisca by ferry. See also Ioan Barnea and Octavian Iliescu, *Constantin cel Mare* (Bucharest, 1982), pp. 115–17 and 136–39.

²⁰ According to Themistius, *Orations* 15, ed. by Riccardo Maisano (Turin, 1995), a statue was later erected behind the Senate for this Tervingian hostage. See Heather, *Goths*, p. 59. From a Roman perspective, the Tervingian *iudex* was nothing more or less than a *rex*. The name of the judge of 332 was Ariaric and his son may have been Aoric, Athanaric's father. See Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 62.

332 is traditionally interpreted as a *foedus*, but coins marked Gothia issued by Constantine on this occasion indicate that the Tervingi were treated not as equal partners, but as dependent subjects. In other words, they were viewed as a client power.²¹ The lack of silver or gold coin finds from southern or eastern Romania, which can be dated between 332 and 340, suggests that the Tervingi received no *stipendia* and no substantial gifts.²² However, on four different occasions between the treaty of 332 and the Gothic wars of 367–69, the Tervingi sent three thousand warriors to fight on the Roman side against Persia.²³ In addition, the Roman influence during this period increased considerably, as a consequence of the fact that the Danube frontier was completely open for trade. This is clearly the explanation for the surge of bronze coins in the region north of the Danube. Moreover, Ulfila, a member of a Tervingian delegation sent to Constantinople at some point between 332 and 337, was consecrated ‘bishop of the Christians in the Getic (i.e., Gothic) land’ and returned to Tervingian territory to bring the word of God to both Tervingi and Romans living among them.²⁴ Ulfila was not the only missionary active in Tervingian territory. Another was Audaio, the aged Mesopotamian bishop sent into exile in the province of Scythia Minor by the Danube.²⁵ Vetrano, the Bishop of Tomis/Constanța, and

²¹ Peter Heather, *Goths and Romans 332–489* (New York, 1991), p. 113. For the treaty of 332 as a *foedus*, see Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 62. For gold coins of Constantine and Constantius with *Gothia* on the obverse and the inscription ‘debellatori gentium barbarum’ on the reverse, see now Andreas Schwarcz, ‘Cult and Religion among the Tervingi and the Visigoths and their Conversion to Christianity’, in *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. by Peter Heather (San Marino, 1999), p. 452; Schmauder, ‘Verzögerte Landnahmen?’, p. 191.

²² Viorel M. Butnariu, ‘Monedele romane postaureliene în teritoriile carpato-dunăreanopontice (anii 275–491)’, *Arheologia Moldovei*, 12 (1988), 148. See also Ion Ioniță, ‘Römische Einflüsse im Verbreitungsgebiet der Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov-Kultur’, *Arheologia Moldovei*, 17 (1994), 112.

²³ In 349 (Libanius, *Orationes* 59.89, ed. by Pierre-Louis Malosse, vol. IV (Paris, 2003)), 360 (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 20.8.1, ed. by Wolfgang Seyfarth (Berlin, 1968–71)), 363 (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 23.2.7), and 365 (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 26.10.3). See Heather, *Goths*, p. 59. In 367, Athanaric produced written evidence of Procopius’s demands of military assistance.

²⁴ Ulfila was consecrated while in Constantinople (Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.5, ed. by Joseph Bidez (Leipzig, 1913)), but he was recognized bishop of the ‘Getic land’ only in 341, at the council of Antioch. See Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 78; Patrick Geary, ‘Barbarians and Ethnicity’, in *Late Antiquity*, ed. by Bowersock, Brown, and Grabar, p. 116; Schwarcz, ‘Cult and Religion’, p. 453.

²⁵ Followers of Audaio advocated the corporeality of God, thus rejecting the Nicæan Creed, and were known for their rigid asceticism. There were many Audaian among the victims of the Tervingian persecution of Christians of 369–72. See Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 79.

Soranus, the duke of the troops stationed in that province, may have been responsible for the Catholic (as opposed to Arian) mission to the Tervingi.²⁶

The Tervingi viewed all these missions as in some way associated with the encroaching Roman power. The reaction was the persecution of 348, during which Ulfila was expelled by the Tervingian judge and offered shelter in the Empire by Emperor Constantius II.²⁷ A new phase of fortification and building activity began under Emperors Valentinian and Valens.²⁸ This did not prevent either the Tervingi from sending a contingent of three thousand warriors to assist the usurper Procopius, or Valens from launching a punitive campaign against them in 367. The Roman army crossed the Danube at Transmarisca/Tutrakan on a pontoon bridge, a clear indication that the bridge at Oescus-Sucidava was not in use any more. Under their new judge Athanaric, the Tervingi withdrew, avoiding any military encounter, while the Romans ravaged their land before returning south of the Danube.²⁹ The next year (368), serious floods prevented Valens from crossing his army from Scythia Minor into the Bărăgan steppe, in an attempt to strike from the east. He eventually managed to cross the Danube at Noviodunum/Isaccea in northern Dobrudja and attacked through the Bugeac steppe north of the Danube Delta. The Romans encountered Athanaric and some of the Tervingian forces, which they defeated. Athanaric opened negotiations, fearing the consequences of the long interruption of trade relations with the Empire and of the famine of 367. Valens, who in the meantime had crossed the Danube and was in Marcianopolis/Devnja (Bulgaria), returned to the Danube to open negotiations with the Tervingian judge on a boat anchored in the middle of the river.³⁰ The peace treaty was a far cry from Constantine's settlement. Trade was now restricted to just two forts on the Danube frontier, and gifts to the Tervingian leaders ceased completely. However, it has been suggested that Valens may have relinquished

²⁶ See Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 83. St Sabas, two presbyters (Sansalas and Gutthikas), and the three martyrs Inna, Rhima, and Pina were all Catholic victims of the persecutions of 369–72. Soranus recovered the remains of St Sabas, and the Catholic Bishop Goddas those of the three martyrs.

²⁷ The only known Tervingian raid across the Danube frontier into Moesia may have been associated with this persecution. Ulfila moved to Nicopolis ad Istrum, where he translated the Bible into Gothic. See Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 80; Heather, *Goths*, p. 63; Schwarcz, 'Cult and Religion', p. 453.

²⁸ This fortification phase was best documented archaeologically at Novae/Svishtov (Bulgaria). See Alexandra Milcheva and Evgeniia Gencheva, 'Die Architektur des römischen Militärlagers und der frühbyzantinischen Stadt Novae (Erkundungen 1980–1994)', in *Roman Limes on the Middle and Lower Danube*, ed. by Petrović, p. 192.

²⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 27.5.4, ed. by Seyfarth.

³⁰ Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, pp. 66–68; Heather, *Goths*, p. 85. Athanaric's power seems to have been centred onto what is today eastern Romania (Moldavia) and the Republic of Moldova.

any claim to protect the Christians north of the river.³¹ Following the treaty, Athanaric did indeed launch an anti-Christian persecution that lasted until 372. Valens encouraged Fritigern, the main rival of the Tervingian judge, to rise against Athanaric, and hostilities between the two lasted until the arrival of the Huns in 375/6. However, Athanaric eventually turned to the Roman emperor (Theodosius I) for protection, and in 381 he was granted asylum in Constantinople in a splendid reception ceremony. He died two weeks later, followed by Ulfila, and both were given Roman funeral rites. In the words of Herwig Wolfram, 'the end of the era of Athanaric meant also the end of the ethnic identity of the Tervingi', for the name is not attested after 382.³²

There is no mention of Sclavenes in any historical source before the reign of Justinian (527–65). It was the first part of Justinian's reign that witnessed the rise of a 'Slavic problem'. In the early 530s, Chilbudius, the *magister militum per Thraciam*, organized a series of expeditions against the barbarians on the left bank of the river.³³ This was the first time the Romans were launching campaigns north of the Danube frontier since Valens's Gothic war of 367–69. Chilbudius's campaigns clearly indicate that the lands of the Sclavenes were not far from the frontier. But Chilbudius was killed in one of his expeditions and 'the river [now] became free for the barbarians to cross all times just as they wished'.³⁴ Following Chilbudius's death, therefore, there was a drastic change in Justinian's agenda in the Balkans. From that moment until Emperor Maurice's campaigns of the 590s, no offensive strategy underpinned imperial policies in the area. Instead, Justinian began an impressive plan of fortification, of a size and quality the Balkans had never witnessed before.³⁵ The project, or its most important part, was completed in some twenty years, namely

³¹ Heather, *Goths*, p. 62. Schwarcz, 'Cult and Religion', p. 454, notes that the peace of 369 allowed the Romans to move troops under the command of the *magister militum* Arintheus (himself of Gothic origin) to the Persian front.

³² Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 74.

³³ The terms used by Procopius to indicate that Chilbudius prevented barbarians from crossing the Danube (*ho potamos diabatos, ten diabasin pollakis, diabenai*), but allowed Romans to cross over the opposite side (*es epeiron ten antiperas* [. . .] *iontes ekteinan te*) show that in his eyes the Danube was still an efficient barrier. See Chrysos, 'Die Nordgrenze', pp. 27–28.

³⁴ Procopius, *Wars* 7.14.4–6, ed. by J. Haury, trans. by H. Dewing (Cambridge, MA, 1914–28). See S. A. Ivanov, L. A. Gindin, and V. L. Cymburskii, 'Prokopii Kesariiski', in *Svod drevneishikh pis'mennykh izvestii o slavianakh*, ed. by L. A. Gindin, S. A. Ivanov, and G. G. Litavrin (Moscow, 1991), p. 217. Chilbudius's campaigns north of the Danube (530–33) may have taken advantage of the transfer of troops from the East following the 532 peace with Persia. See Ivan Duichev, 'Balkanskiat iugoiztok prez pārvata polovina na VI vek', *Belomorski pregled*, 1 (1942), 229–70.

³⁵ Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, pp. 151–69.

by the time Procopius had finished working on Book IV of his *Buildings*.³⁶ In addition, Justinian remodelled the administrative structure of the Balkans and created the *quaestura exercitus* in order to support both financially and militarily those provinces on the Danube frontier which were most affected by his building program.³⁷ He also shifted military responsibilities from army generals to local authorities, especially bishops.³⁸ These measures were not taken in response to any particular threat, for Roman troops were still in control of the left bank of the Danube, possibly through bridge-heads such as those at Drobeta/Turnu Severin and Sucidava/Celei.³⁹ This, at least, is the meaning of the edict 13 of 538, according to which troops were still sent, if only as a form of punishment, north of the Danube River, 'in order to watch at the frontier of that place'.⁴⁰ In addition to military and administrative

³⁶ For the dating of the *Buildings*, see Otto Veh, *Zur Geschichtsschreibung und Weltauffassung des Prokop von Caesarea* (Bayreuth, 1951), p. 9; J. A. S. Evans, 'The Dates of the *Anecdota* and the *De aedificiis* of Procopius', *Classical Philology*, 44 (1969), 30; Michael Whitby, 'Justinian's Bridge over the Sangarius and the Date of Procopius' *De aedificiis*', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 105 (1985), 145; Geoffrey Greatrex, 'The Dates of Procopius' Works', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 18 (1994), 113; J. A. S. Evans, 'The Dates of Procopius' Works: A Recapitulation of the Evidence', *Greek, Roman & Byzantine Studies*, 37 (1996), 301–13. See also Philip Rousseau, 'Procopius's *Buildings* and Justinian's Pride', *Byzantion*, 46 (1998), 121–30, and Denis Roques, 'Les *Constructions de Justinien* de Procope de Césarée', *Antiquité tardive*, 8 (2000), 31–43.

³⁷ Created in 536, the new administrative unit combined territories at a considerable distance from each other, such as Moesia Inferior, Scythia Minor, some islands in the Aegean Sea, Caria, and Cyprus, all of which were ruled from Odessos/Varna (Bulgaria) by the prefect of the *quaestura*. See Novel 41 of 536, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. by Paul Krüger and others, 3 vols (Berlin, 1954), III, 262. According to John Lydus (*On Powers* 2.28, ed. by Anastasius C. Bardy (Philadelphia, 1982)), Justinian set aside for the prefect of the *quaestura* 'three provinces, which were almost the most prosperous of all'. For the *quaestura exercitus*, see Samuel Szádeczky-Kardoss, 'Bemerkungen über den "Quaestor Iustinianus exercitus": Zur Frage der Vorstufen der Themenverfassung', in *From Late Antiquity to Early Byzantium: Proceedings of the Byzantinological Symposium in the 16th International Eirene Conference*, ed. by Vladimír Vavrinek (Prague, 1985), pp. 61–64; Sergei Torbatov, 'Quaestura exercitus: Moesia Secunda and Scythia under Justinian', *Archaeologia Bulgarica*, 1 (1997), 78–87; Florin Curta, 'Quaestura exercitus Iustiniani: The Evidence of Seals', *Acta Byzantina Fennica*, 1 (2002), 9–26.

³⁸ The Bishop of Aquis, a city in Dacia Ripensis, on the right bank of the Danube, was given authority over the city and the neighbouring forts. See Novel 11 of 535, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. by Krüger and others, III, 94.

³⁹ Mișu Davidescu, *Drobeta în secolele I–VII e.n.* (Craiova, 1980); D. Tudor, *Sucidava: Une cité daco-romaine et byzantine en Dacie* (Brussels, 1965).

⁴⁰ *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. by Krüger and others, I, 785. See Michael Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford, 1988), p. 166 with n. 34.

measures, Justinian offered his alliance to the Antes (*foedus* of 545)⁴¹ and began to recruit mercenaries from among both Sclavenes and Antes for his war in Italy.⁴²

All this suggests that Chilbudius's campaigns of the early 530s had opened a series of very aggressive measures on the Danube frontier, which were meant to consolidate the Roman military infrastructure in the Balkans. It is during this period of aggressive intrusion into affairs north of the Danube frontier that Sclavenes and Antes entered the orbit of Roman interests. Justinian's measures were meant to stabilize the situation in *barbaricum*, which is why the *foedus* with the Antes was only agreed upon at the end of a relatively long war between the Antes and the Sclavenes.⁴³ Knowing that the year of the first recorded raid of the Sclavenes is 545,⁴⁴ it is possible that Slavene raiding was a response to Justinian's aggressive policies with both the fortified frontier and his barbarian allies. However, following a number of destructive attacks, during which the Slavene warriors reached Dyrrachium/Durrës (Albania),⁴⁵ took Topeiros/Xanthi (northern Greece),⁴⁶ and threatened Thessalonica,⁴⁷ the raids abruptly stopped and for twenty-five years there were no raids across the Danube.

The interruption of Slavene raids coincides with the completion of the building programme. Along the Danube and in the immediate hinterland, relatively small forts were built, each with less than 1 ha of enclosed area and a garrison no larger than five hundred men. An estimation of the number of soldiers manning these forts in the Iron Gates area suggests that the entire sector may have relied for its defence

⁴¹ Procopius, *Wars* 7.14.21 and 7.14.32–33, ed. by Haury, trans. by Dewing. The Antes are specifically mentioned as *enspondoi*. They were offered a deserted city north of the Danube (Turris) and large sums of money as stipends. See Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, pp. 80–81; Igor Corman, 'Migrațiile din teritoriul dintre Carpați și Nistru în secolele V–VII: Problema anților', in *Spațiul nord-est carpatic în mileniul întunecat*, ed. by Victor Spinei (Iași, 1997), pp. 67–77.

⁴² In 537, 1600 horsemen, most of whom were Sclavenes and Antes, 'who were settled above the Ister river not far from its banks', were shipped to Italy, in order to rescue Belisarius, who was blocked in Rome by the Ostrogoths (Procopius, *Wars* 5.27.1, ed. by Haury, trans. by Dewing). In 547, three hundred Antes were fighting in Lucania against the Ostrogoths (Procopius, *Wars* 7.22.3–6). Slavene mercenaries participated in the siege of Auximum in 540 (Procopius, *Wars* 6.26.16–22).

⁴³ Procopius, *Wars* 7.14.7–10, ed. by Haury, trans. by Dewing. The war ended with a victory of the Sclavenes over the Antes.

⁴⁴ Procopius, *Wars* 7.13.26, ed. by Haury, trans. by Dewing.

⁴⁵ Procopius, *Wars* 7.29.2 (raid of 548), ed. by Haury, trans. by Dewing.

⁴⁶ Procopius, *Wars* 7.38.11–23 (raid of 549), ed. by Haury, trans. by Dewing.

⁴⁷ Procopius, *Wars* 7.40.4–5 (raid of 550), ed. by Haury, trans. by Dewing. For this particular raid, see M. Iu. Braichevskii, 'Z istorii slo'viano-vizantiys'kykh viyn VI st. Viyna 550–551 rr.', in *Etno'kulturni protsesy v Pivdenno-Skhidniy Evropi v I tysiaholitti n.e. Zbirnyk naukovykh prats'*, ed. by R. V. Terpilovskii, N. S. Abashina, L. E. Skiba, and V. I. Ivanovskii (Kiev, 1999), pp. 41–48.

on forces amounting to some five thousand men, the equivalent of a Roman legion. Raids strong enough to reach distant targets, such as Thessalonica, must therefore have aimed at gathering a military force roughly equivalent to a Roman legion. This is an indirect indication of the problems of mobilizing warriors for a successful raid across the Danube, which Sclavene chiefs may have faced.⁴⁸ However, none of the Sclavene raids of the 540s or early 550s is known to have been organized under the leadership of a chief. Procopius carefully noted the names of Herulian, Gepid, Lombard, or Cutrigur leaders — to name just a few groups in the Danube region — but knew no Sclavene chief. Furthermore, he claimed that the Sclavenes and the Antes ‘were not ruled by one man, but they [had] lived from old under a democracy, and consequently everything which involves their welfare, whether for good or for ill, was referred to the people’.⁴⁹

Writing as he did in c. 560, the author of the *Eratopokriseis* (*Dialogues*) known as Pseudo-Caesarius⁵⁰ knew that, living without the rule of anyone, the Sclavenes often killed their leaders ‘sometimes at feasts, sometimes on travels’.⁵¹ At the turn of the century, the picture radically changed, as the author of the *Strategikon* now recommended that Roman officers win over some of the Sclavene chiefs by persuasion or gifts, while attacking others, ‘so that their common hostility will not make them united or bring them together under one ruler’.⁵² The Sclavene raids resumed in the late 570s, but they were unlike those of the 540s and 550s in that written sources retained the names of many Sclavene leaders, apparently different in status from each other. Names such as Dauritas, Ardagastus, Musocius, and Peiragastus are in sharp contrast to the lack of any chief names in Procopius’s work. Something had radically changed in Slavic society as the Slavic raiding activity resumed in the late 570s. Unlike 551, the Sclavenes of 584 were capable of coordinating their actions, attacking Thessalonica by surprise, and remaining on Roman territory not just for a

⁴⁸ Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, p. 182 and p. 184 fig. 13. The evidence of the late sixth- or early seventh-century military treatise known as the *Strategikon* indicates that the population of a Sclavene *chorion* was somewhat inferior in size to one or two bandons of the Roman army (four hundred to eight hundred men). See *Strategikon* XI 4.43, ed. by George T. Dennis and Ernst Gamillscheg (Vienna, 1981).

⁴⁹ Procopius, *Wars* 7.14.22, ed. by Haury, trans. by Dewing. For the Slavic ‘democracy’, see Genadii G. Litavrin, *Vizantiia i slaviane (sbornik statei)* (St Petersburg, 1999), pp. 539–47.

⁵⁰ For *Eratopokriseis*, see Rudolf Riedinger, *Pseudo-Kaisarios: Überlieferungsgeschichte und Verfasserfrage* (Munich, 1969). For Pseudo-Caesarius and the Slavs, see also Ivan Duichev, ‘Le témoignage de Pseudo-Césaire sur les Slaves’, *Slavia Antiqua*, 4 (1953), 193–209; S. A. Ivanov, ‘Psevd-Kesarii’, in *Svod drevneishikh pis’mennykh izvestii o slavianakh*, ed. by Gindin, Ivanov, and Litavrin, pp. 251–64; and ‘Psevd-Kesarii, Prokopii i problemy informirovannosti o slavianakh v seredine VI v.’, in *Etnogenez, ranniaia etnicheskaia istoriia i kul’tura slavian*, ed. by Nikita I. Tolstoi (Moscow, 1985), pp. 14–16.

⁵¹ Riedinger, *Pseudo-Kaisarios*, p. 302.

⁵² *Strategikon* XI 4.30, ed. by Dennis and Gamillscheg.

winter, but for four consecutive years.⁵³ They also reached the outskirts of Constantinople and the threat seems to have been so great that Emperor Maurice had to use the circus factions, the Greens and the Blues, to garrison the Long Walls. In 585, another large group of Slavene warriors was roaming in the vicinity of Adrianople.⁵⁴ Their leader was a certain Ardagastus, who became one of the targets of Maurice's war against the Slavenes in the early 590s.⁵⁵ For the first time since Chilbudius's expeditions, the Roman army launched a campaign across the Danube frontier. Roman attacks were targeted against a relatively limited territory in the south-eastern region of present-day Romania. They did not aim to conquer, but strictly to protect what was still viewed as the frontier of the Empire. However, while the Roman troops were aggressively moving against a number of Slavene leaders and their *choria*, other Slavenes were busy sacking forts south of the Danube, in Moesia Inferior.⁵⁶ The campaign of 594 was led by Emperor Maurice's own brother, Peter, who crossed the Danube at the mouth of the Olt River, only to be ambushed by the Slavenes under the command of their leader Peiragastus. In the ensuing battle, Peiragastus was killed and his warriors turned to flight. Peter's troops pressed the pursuit, but were again ambushed at the crossing of Helibacia, one of the Danube's tributary rivers to the north, and withdrew with great losses. The war against the Slavenes resumed in 602, as Peter's second-in-command, Godwin, crossed the Danube and raided several Slavene villages. The Roman troops were still waging war on the Slavenes when Emperor Maurice's order to his army to pass the winter in Slavene territory sparked the mutiny that would eventually bring Phocas onto the imperial throne. According to the seventh-century Armenian chronicle attributed to Sebeos, after overthrowing Maurice in 602, the army returned to the Danube front and continued to wage war 'against the enemy'.⁵⁷ The definite withdrawal of all troops from Europe came in about 620, as Emperor Heraclius was preparing his campaign against Persia. By that time, the inhabitants of Thessalonica had already become accustomed to the presence of the Slavs recently settled around the city.

⁵³ John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.6.25, ed. by E. I. Brooks (Paris, 1935); *Miracles of St Demetrius* 1.12.107–113, ed. by Paul Lemerle (Paris, 1979).

⁵⁴ Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 1.7.3–6, ed. by Carl de Boor and Peter Wirth (Stuttgart, 1972).

⁵⁵ Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 6.7.4–5, ed. by de Boor and Wirth.

⁵⁶ Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 6.8.4–8, ed. by de Boor and Wirth.

⁵⁷ *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, translated by R. W. Thomson (Liverpool, 1999), pp. 80 and 196.

Material Culture and the Danube Frontier

The implementation of Justinian's fortified frontier was accompanied by its economic 'closure', indicated by the absence of both bronze and gold coins dated between 545 and 565 from either stray or hoard finds in Romania.⁵⁸ Whether or not coins of Justinian and his successors were used as 'primitive money', their very existence north of the Danube presupposes that copper coinage was of some value even outside the system which guaranteed its presumably fiduciary nature. If so, the inflation delineated by the analysis of hoards found in the Balkans (south of the Danube River), which became visible especially after 550, as the purchasing power of the *folles* began to decrease dramatically, as well as the economic strains on the general circulation of goods, may have affected also the owners of the Romanian hoards.

The sixth- and early seventh-century numismatic evidence from Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine is in sharp contrast to that of the fourth century (Fig. 1). Unlike most other parts of the Empire at that time, the regions north of the Danube produced a considerable quantity of silver coins, many of which come from a limited area in southern Romania, between the Olt and the Argeş rivers.⁵⁹ Besides coins minted for Constantine I, most specimens are issues of Constantius II struck in Sirmium during the 350s, followed by those of Valens. There are no finds of either bronze or silver coins minted between 375 and 378. The presence of silver coins in the region has been explained in terms of the slave trade with the Tervingi that is frequently mentioned in contemporary sources.⁶⁰ However, the relatively small number of individual hoards, as well as the concentration of earlier hoards on the territory of the present-day Republic of Moldova,⁶¹ that is, far from the Danube, suggest a different

⁵⁸ See Florin Curta, 'Invasion or Inflation? Sixth- to Seventh-Century Byzantine Coin Hoards in Eastern and Southeastern Europe', *Annali dell'Istituto Italiano di Numismatica*, 43 (1996), 65–224; Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 'La monnaie byzantine des VI^e–VIII^e siècles au-delà de la frontière du Bas-Danube: Entre politique, économie et diffusion culturelle', *Histoire & Mesure*, 17 (2002), 155–96. See also Hermine Göricke-Lukić, 'Justinijanov novac iz Slavonije i Baranje', in *Radovi XIII. Međunarodnog Kongresa za starokršćansku arheologiju. Split-Poreč (25.9.–1.10. 1994)*, ed. by Nenad Cambi and Emilio Marin, vol. II (Vatican, 1998), pp. 1144–59.

⁵⁹ The only other country where fourth-century silver coins were found in such abundance is Britain. G. L. Duncan, *Coin Circulation in the Danubian and Balkan Provinces of the Roman Empire AD 294–578* (London, 1993), p. 110.

⁶⁰ Duncan, *Coin Circulation*, pp. 111–12; Shaw, 'War and Violence', p. 162.

⁶¹ The Taraclia, Chişinău, Budăi, and Brăneşti hoards are all dated between 351 and 355. There are only two hoards dated to the following decade (Gura Ialomiţei and Viespeşti). See Butnariu, 'Monedele romane postaureliene', p. 135; Elena S. Stoliarik, *Essays on Monetary Circulation in the North-Western Black Sea Region in the Late Roman and Byzantine Periods (Late 3rd century–Early 13th Century A.D.)* (Odessa, 1992), pp. 29–32. For 149 hoard finds of *siliquae* minted for Constantius II alone, there are only seven single finds, which strongly suggests that silver did not circulate as money. See A. A. Nudel'man, *Topografiia kladov i nakhodok edinichnykh monet* (Kishinew, 1976), pp. 62, 64, 69, 77, and 80.

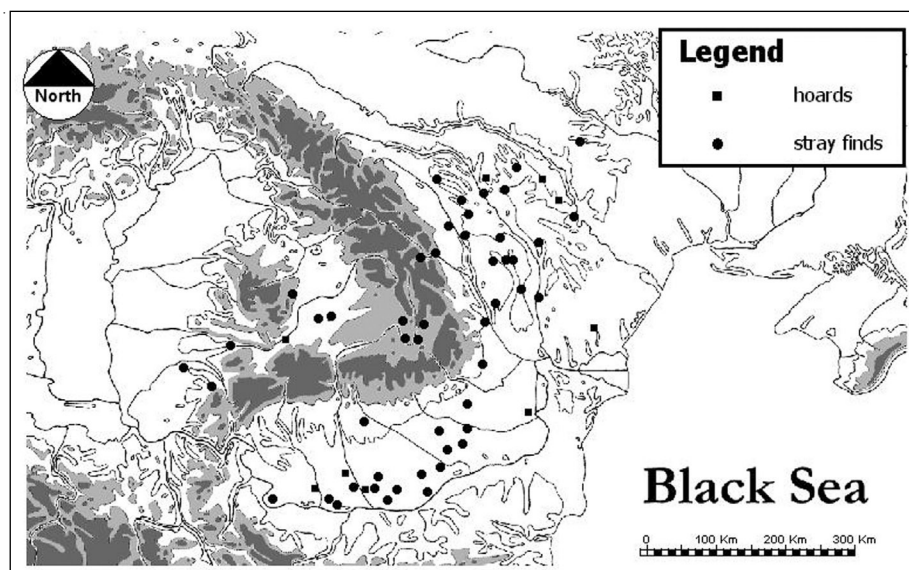


Figure 1. Stray finds and hoards of fourth-century Roman silver coins north of the Danube River.

Data after Butnariu, 'Monedele romane postaureliene', and Stoliarik, *Essays*.

interpretation. Moreover, despite continuation, after 369, of trade relations with the Tervingi, albeit on a much-reduced scale, the circulation of silver coins came to an end in 367. It is therefore preferable to associate hoards of *siliquae* found in Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine with gift-giving practices of the kind that disappeared after Valens's peace with Athanaric. Like the Sclavenes of the mid-sixth century, Athanaric may have been suddenly confronted with an interruption of privileged relations with the Empire, which had been until then the basis for the representation of power in Tervingian society.⁶² However, unlike the Sclavene leaders of the sixth, Tervingian judges of the fourth century were not only granted access to trade with the Roman Empire, but also enjoyed the benefits of the imperial largesse.

The evidence for trade between Tervingi and Romans is contradictory. On the one hand, during the fourth century, the list of items not to be exported outside the Empire was extended to include wine, olive oil, and gold.⁶³ On the other hand, several authors mention trade relations between the Tervingi and the Empire,

⁶² For a similar phenomenon on the north-western periphery of the fourth-century Empire, see Sebastian Brather, 'Acculturation and Ethnogenesis along the Frontier: Rome and the Ancient Germans in an Archaeological Perspective' (in this volume).

⁶³ For gold, see *Codex Iustinianus* 4.63.2 (of 374), in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. Krüger and others, vol. II. By that time, the list already included salt, grain, and iron.

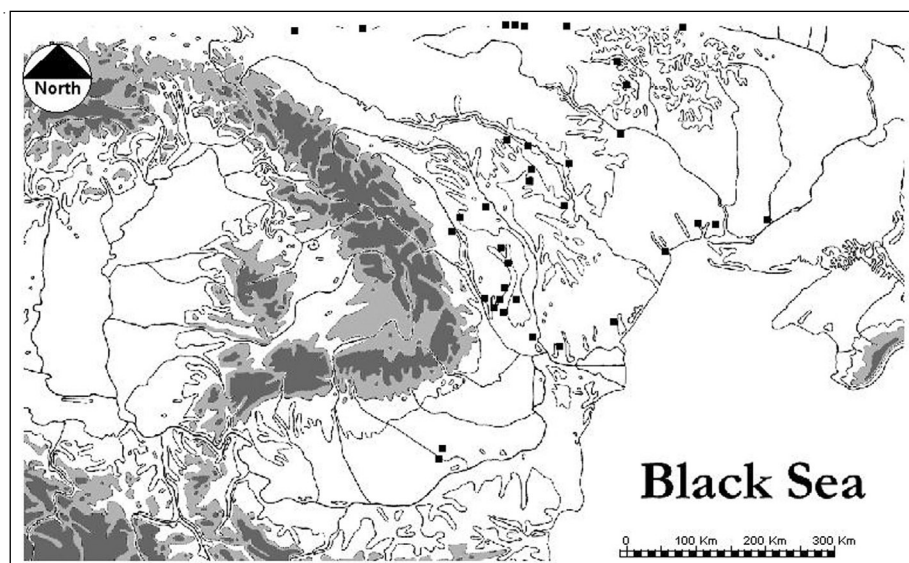


Figure 2. Third- and fourth-century ploughshare finds north of the Danube River. Data after Ioniță, 'Römische Einflüsse', and Magomedov, *Cherniakhovskaia kul'tura*.

particularly with slaves.⁶⁴ There is little archaeological evidence of large-scale trade between the Balkan provinces and the Tervingi. Most ploughshares found on third- and fourth-century sites north of the Danube have good analogies in early third-century assemblages on the territory of the Roman provinces of Dacia, Pannonia, and Dalmatia, but not south of the Danube, in Moesia (Fig. 2). All metal vessels found on sites north of the Danube seem to be much older than the date of the archaeological context in which they were found, arguably of the first century AD.⁶⁵ A number of amphorae appear on sites not far from the Danube River or along some of its northern tributaries (Siret and Prut), but the number of such finds is not very impressive and they all seem to have been produced not in the Balkans, but in workshops north

⁶⁴ E.g., Themistius, *Orations* 10.135 a–d, ed. by Maisano; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 22.7.8 and 31.4.5, ed. by Seyfarth.

⁶⁵ I. T. Nikulica and E. A. Rikman, 'Mogil'nik Khanska-Luteria II pervykh stoletii n.e. (Moldaviia)', *Kratkie soobshcheniia Instituta Arkheologii AN SSSR*, 133 (1973), 116–23, esp. fig. 48; I. A. Rafalovich, *Dancheni: Mogil'nik chernyakhovskoi kul'tury III–IV vv. n.e.* (Kishinev, 1986), pl. 37/3; B. V. Magomedov and M. E. Lebeda, 'Cherniakhivskiy mogil'nik Petrykivtsi 1', in *Arkheologichni doslidzhennia na Ukraini 1993 roku* (Kiev, 1997), pp. 80–81 and fig. 1/12. See also Ioniță, 'Römische Einflüsse', p. 111; Boris Magomedov, *Cherniakhovskaia kul'tura: Problema etnosa* (Lublin, 2001), pp. 64 and 89–90.

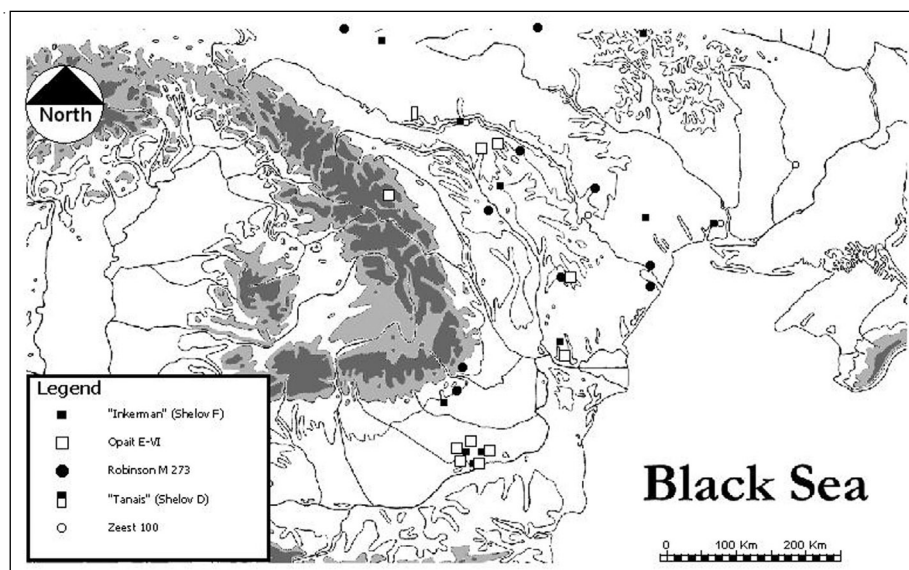


Figure 3. Third- and fourth-century amphora finds north of the Danube River. Data after Ioniță, 'Römische Einflüsse', and Magomedov, *Cherniakhovskaia kul'tura*.

of the Black Sea, possibly in Crimea (Fig. 3).⁶⁶ Similarly, jugs found on sites in the Lower Danube region have good analogies in Crimean ceramic assemblages of the mid-300s.⁶⁷ No pottery produced in any one of the centres of ceramic production excavated in rural areas in Scythia Minor (present-day Dobruđja) was found north of

⁶⁶ Ioniță, 'Römische Einflüsse', p. 111; Bucur Mitrea, 'Die Goten an der unteren Donau: Einige Probleme im II.–IV. Jahrhundert', *Studia Gothica*, 4 (1972), 193 fig. 4; Magomedov, *Cherniakhovskaia kul'tura*, pp. 62–63. This is particularly true for Opaît's class E–VI, which was mainly used for the transportation of olive oil. See Andrei Opaît, 'Ceramica din așezarea și cetatea de la Independența (Murighiol) secolele V î.e.n.–VII e.n.', *Peuce*, 10 (1991), 149. It goes without saying that Crimean amphorae may well have transported goods traded by merchants from Scythia Minor. The earliest finds of Late Roman 1 and Late Roman 2 amphorae north of the Danube are so far those of the late fourth- and fifth-century settlement excavated at Cireșanu, near Ploiești. See Victor Teodorescu, 'Cireșanu: Un aspect cultural daco-roman din sec. IV–V e.n. la sud de Carpați', *Anuarul Muzeului de Istorie și Arheologie Prahova*, 1 (1984), 51–99.

⁶⁷ Magomedov, *Cherniakhovskaia kul'tura*, pp. 63–64. Two cemeteries in southern Romania (Spanțov and Nicolae Bălcescu) produced glazed pottery most typical for third-century assemblages in Pannonia. See Bucur Mitrea and Constantin Preda, *Necropole din secolul al IV-lea în Muntenia* (Bucharest, 1966), fig. 80 and 246/4. *Oenochorae* found on several sites in Romania and Moldova may have been produced in urban centres in the southern Balkans (Magomedov, *Cherniakhovskaia kul'tura*, p. 64).

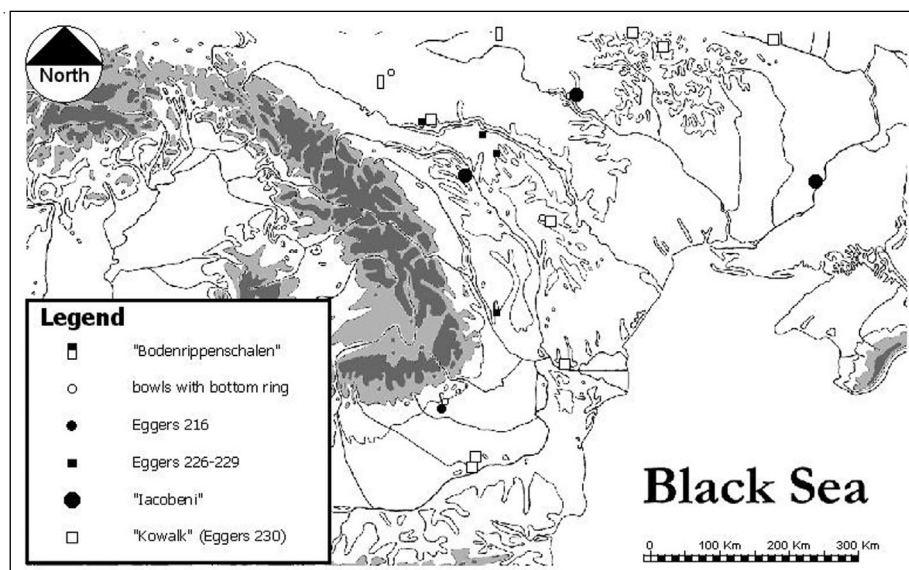


Figure 4. Third- and fourth-century glass bowls north of the Danube River. Data after Gomolka-Fuchs, 'Gläser der Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov-Kultur', and Magomedov, *Černiakhovskaia kul'tura*.

the Danube.⁶⁸ There is plenty of evidence of trade between cities in Scythia Minor, especially Tomis/Constanța, and the production centres in the eastern Mediterranean and the northern coast of the Black Sea. However, if olive oil, wine, or *garum* were imported into the province, most probably for redistribution, very small quantities were allowed to pass further, across the frontier. A relatively large number of finds of glassware of Roman origin — beakers, beads, and game tokens — are known from the western area of the so-called Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov culture (Fig. 4).⁶⁹ The earliest finds of glass bowls date to the late 200s and the first three decades of

⁶⁸ Dinogetia: Gheorghe Ștefan, 'Un cuptor de ars țigle, descoperit la Garvăn', *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche*, 8 (1957), 339–45. Telița: V. H. Baumann, *Așezări rurale antice în zona Gurilor Dunării* (Tulcea, 1995), pp. 37–38. See also Andrei Opaț, *Aspecte ale vieții economice din provincia Scythia (secolele IV–VI p.Ch.). Producția ceramicii locale și de import* (Bucharest, 1996), pp. 24–28 and 146–47.

⁶⁹ E. A. Symonovich, 'Stekliannaia posuda iz podneprovsko-prichernomorskikh pamiatnikov cherniakhovskoi kul'tury', *Sovetskaia Arkheologiia*, 1 (1977), 176–86; Iu. A. Likhter, 'Steklo chernyakhovskoi kul'tury', *Rossiiskaia Arkheologiia*, 2 (1998), 25–39; Gudrun Gomolka-Fuchs, 'Gläser der Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov-Kultur aus Rumänien und der Republik Moldavien', in *Die Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov-Kultur: Akten des internationalen Kolloquiums in Caputh vom 20. bis 24. Oktober 1995*, ed. by G. Gomolka-Fuchs (Bonn, 1999), pp. 129–42.

the fourth century.⁷⁰ The number of finds increases dramatically during the following decades with the appearance of specimens of Eggers's class 230 (the so-called Kowalk beaker).⁷¹ Because of their possible association with ritual drinking, such artefacts may indicate the presence of individuals of high social rank.⁷² However, glass artefacts were also produced locally in workshops such as that excavated at Komarova on the Dniester River.⁷³ Later specimens may have arrived in the region from Scandinavia, not the Empire, as suggested by the beaker of Straume's class IX recently found in an inhumation burial of the cemetery excavated at Izvoare (eastern Romania).⁷⁴ Contacts with Scandinavia were already and firmly established by the time the Tervingi first appear in historical sources. Joachim Werner has shown that finds of so-called 'monstrous brooches' (Almgren's classes 216 and 217) and of iron combs with perforated handles on burial sites in eastern Romania and the Republic of Moldova may be associated with a female aristocratic dress of Scandinavian origin.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Finds in the Lower Danube region fall into four groups: bowls with ring bottoms, Eggers's classes 216 and 226–29, and Ioniță's class Iacobeni. See H. Eggers, *Der römische Import im freien Germanien* (Hamburg, 1951); G. Rau, 'Körpergräber mit Glasbeigaben des 4. nachchristlichen Jahrhunderts im Oder-Weichsel Raum', *Acta Praehistorica et Archaeologica*, 3 (1972), 109–214; Ion Ioniță, 'Eine Glasschale mit eingeritztem Wabenmuster und Fetterschliff von Iacobeni (Kr. Iași)', *Dacia*, 38–39 (1994–95), 151–62.

⁷¹ Ioniță, 'Römische Einflüsse', p. 111; Magomedov, *Cherniakhovskaia kul'tura*, p. 65.

⁷² Boris Magomedov, 'The Tradition of Ritual Feasts as a Part of Burial Customs in Chernyakhov-Sintana Culture', *Archaeologia Bulgarica*, 4 (2000), 59–64. Slightly later specimens have cheering inscriptions in Greek. See S. Țau and M. Nicu, 'Ein beschrifteter Glasbecher aus der Nekropole von Barcea-Tecuci (4. Jahrhundert u.Z.)', *Dacia*, 29 (1985), 165–66; E. A. Symonovich, 'Koblevskii i Ranzhevskii mogil'niki okolo g. Odessy', in *Mogil'niki cherniakhovskoi kul'tury*, ed. by E. A. Symonovich (Moscow, 1979), p. 108. For ritual drinking in *barbaricum*, see Alex Woolf and Roy Eldridge, 'Sharing a Drink with Marcel Mauss: The Uses and Abuses of Alcohol in Early Medieval Europe', *Journal of European Archaeology*, 2 (1994), 327–40.

⁷³ Iu. L. Shchapova, 'Masterskaia po proizvodstvo stekla u s. Komarovo', *Sovetskaia Arkheologiya*, 3 (1978), 230–42. Glass beads produced at Komarova were found on the neighbouring site at Oselivka. See G. F. Nikitina, *Analiz arkheologicheskikh istochnikov mogil'nika cherniakhovskoi kul'tury u sela Oselivka* (Moscow, 1995), p. 71.

⁷⁴ Marius Alexianu and Linda Ellis, 'La tombe IX de Izvoare, dép. de Neamț, appartenant à la culture de Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov', *Arheologia Moldovei*, 18 (1995), 297 (dated to the last quarter of the fourth century). All known beakers of Straume's class IX have been found in Norway and Sweden. See E. Straume, 'Glasgefäße mit Reparatur in norwegischen Grabenfunde der Völkerwanderungszeit', in *Festschrift zum 50-jährigen Bestehen der Vorgeschichtlichen Seminars Marburg*, ed. by Otto-Herman Frey (Gladenbach, 1977), pp. 237–82.

⁷⁵ Joachim Werner, 'Dančeny und Brangstrup: Untersuchungen zur Černjachov-Kultur zwischen Sereth und Dnestr und zu den "Reichtumszentren" auf Fünen', *Bonner Jahrbücher*, 188 (1988), 247–50 and 254–56. For 'monstrous brooches', see now T. A. Shcherbakova and M. B. Shchukin, 'O dvukh stiliakh v iuelirnom iskusstve cherniakhovskoi kul'ture (po materialam Dnestrovsko-Prutskogo mezhdurech'ia)', in *Drevnosti Iugo-Zapada SSSR*, ed. by

Less than a century later, locally produced fibulae replaced, to a large extent, exotic artefacts of Scandinavian origin, and the construction of elevated social status employed very different forms of material culture.⁷⁶ A number of late fourth-century sites in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine have produced buildings with stone walls (Fig. 5). At Sobari, more than 400 km away from the closest point on the Danube frontier of the Empire, a porticoed house was found, which produced remains of glass windows and roof tiles. One of its two rooms produced a fragment of a glass beaker, the other a late fourth-century amphora.⁷⁷

At a quick glimpse, what emerges from the examination of the sixth-century archaeological evidence is a different picture. Grey gritty wares, the sixth- to seventh-century standard Roman cooking ware, occasionally appears north of the Danube.⁷⁸ Amphora shards were found on several sites south and east of the Carpathian Mountains (Fig. 6).⁷⁹

P. P. Byrnia (Kishinew, 1991), pp. 39–45. For iron combs, see J. Ilkjaer, 'Zwischen Blindheim, Jabara and Mănăstirea: Zu eisernen Kämmen der römischen Kaiserzeit im Barbaricum', in *20 lat archeologii w Masłomęczu*, ed. by J. Ilkjaer and A. Kokowski, vol. II (Lublin, 1998), pp. 43–54. According to Ilkjaer, such artefacts were not personal, but weaving accessories. In any case, since most known specimens are perforated, they must have been worn as dress accessories, perhaps hanging from the belt at the waist.

⁷⁶ For new types of brooches, see Magomedov, *Cherniakhovskaia kul'tura*, pp. 66–69. Similarly, jugs manufactured locally outnumbered Roman imports, while clay replicas replaced expensive glass beakers. See Magomedov, *Cherniakhovskaia kul'tura*, pp. 51–52 and 54–55.

⁷⁷ Alexandru Popa, 'Die Besiedlung Sobari, Kr. Sorocea (Republik Moldau)', *Germania*, 75 (1997), 119–31. Another such building was found at Komarova and was associated with the glass production centre. See also Boris Magomedov, 'La stratification sociale de la population de la culture de Černjachov', in *La noblesse romaine et les chefs barbares du III^e au VI^e siècle*, ed. by Françoise Vallet and Michel Kazanski (Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1995), pp. 133–38; Alexandru Popa, *Romains ou barbares? Architecture en pierre dans la Barbaricum à l'époque romaine tardive (sur le matériel archéologique du Nord-Ouest du Pont Euxin)* (Chişinău, 2001), esp. pp. 129–41 and 151–55.

⁷⁸ Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche, 'Un complex din secolul al VI-lea la Sfînteşti', *Studii şi cercetări de istorie veche*, 18.1 (1967), 127–34; Gábor Vékony, 'A koraavarkori keramikatípusok történeti topográfiájához', *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 100 (1973), 213. For grey gritty wares, see also Georgi Kuzmanov, 'Rannovizantiiska keramika ot Trakiia i Dakiia (IV-nachaloto na VII v.)', *Razkopki i prouchvaniia*, 13 (1985), 47; J. W. Hayes, *Excavations at Saraçhane in Istanbul* (Princeton, 1992), p. 54.

⁷⁹ Margareta Constantiniu, 'Şantierul arheologic Băneasa-Străuleşti', *Cercetări arheologice în Bucureşti*, 2 (1965), 90–91; Mioara Turcu and C. Marinescu, 'Consideraţii privind "Foişorul Mavrocordaţilor"', *Bucureşti: Materiale de istorie şi muzeografie*, 6 (1968), 125 fig. 6/8; Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche, *Aşezări din secolele III şi VI e.n. în sud-vestul Munteniei: Cercetările de la Dulceanca* (Bucharest, 1974), fig. 85/6–8; Ioan Mitrea, C. Eminovici, and V. Momanu, 'Aşezarea din secolele V–VII de la Ştefan cel Mare, jud. Bacău', *Carpica*, 18–19 (1986–87), 224; I. A. Rafalovich, *Slaviane VI–IX vekov v Moldavii* (Kishinew, 1972), p. 38 fig. 8/8; I. A. Rafalovich, 'Raskopki ranneslavianskogo poseleniia VI–VII vv. n.e. u sela Selishte', in *Arkheologicheskie issledovaniia v Moldavii v 1968–1969 gg.*, ed. by I. A. Rafalovich (Kishinew, 1972), p. 127 and fig. 5/5–6.

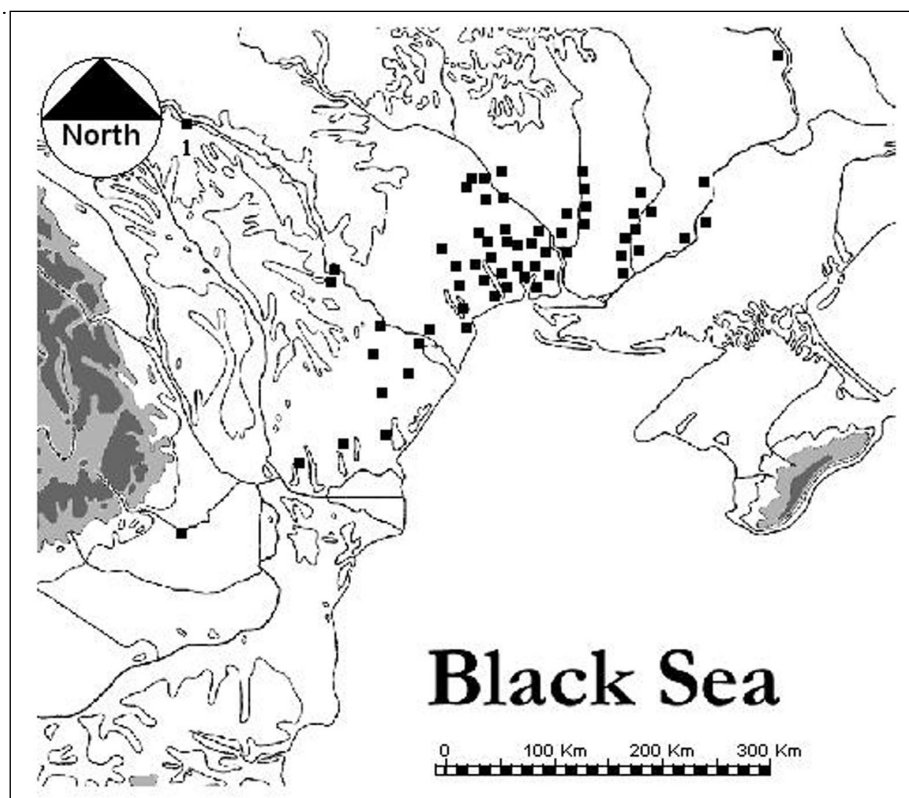


Figure 5. Fourth-century sites with stone buildings in the Black Sea area (after Popa, *Romains ou barbares?*).

Many belong to Late Roman 1 and Late Roman 2 amphorae, produced in the eastern Mediterranean area, while amphorae found on contemporary sites in Scythia Minor are conspicuously absent.⁸⁰ Rare specimens of Late Roman 2 amphorae with pointed tips (which cannot be dated after c. 550) indicate that wine and olive oil from the Aegean may have reached settlements north of the Danube frontier as early as the

⁸⁰ E.g., amphorae of the Scorpan IX = Kuzmanov XVI = Antonova V = Opaît B-Id class appear only in the Middle Dnieper area. Just as with contemporary specimens of Late Roman 1 and 2 found in Cornwall and Ireland, amphorae found in regions so far away from their production centres in the eastern Mediterranean area point to trade relations. That early Byzantine ships were sailing on the Lower Dnieper in the early seventh century is suggested by the anchor found at Khortitsia, near Zaporizhzhia. Its closest analogy is the anchor of the Yassi Ada shipwreck. See G. I. Shapovalov, 'Iakir V–VII st. z Dnipra bilia ostrova Khortitsia', *Arkheolohiia*, 1 (1990), 120–21.

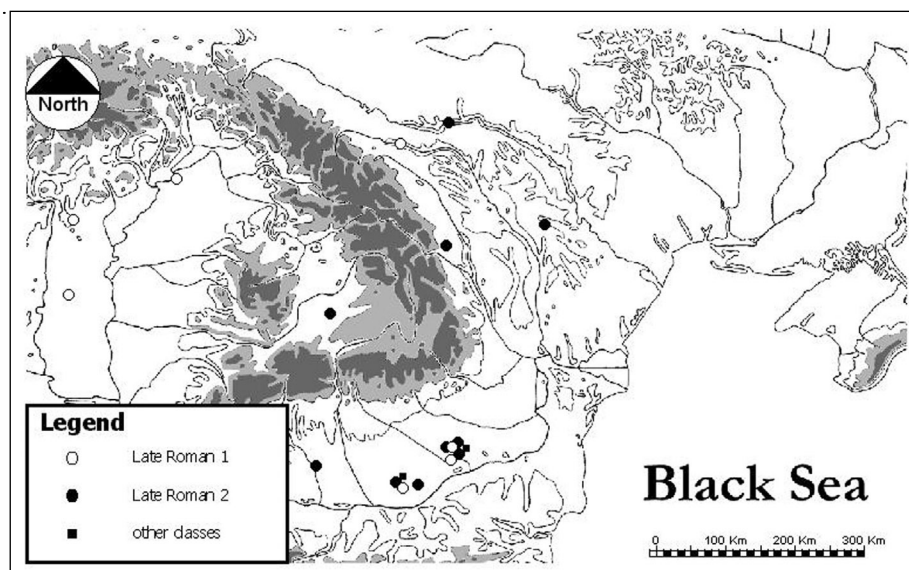


Figure 6. Sixth- and early seventh-century amphora finds north of the Danube River.

first decades of the sixth century.⁸¹ A copper pitcher found together with a hoard of bronze coins in Horgești (north-eastern Romania) has good analogies in the Mediterranean area.⁸² Fibulae with bent stems found on Romanian sites were certainly manufactured in frontier forts such as Aquae/Prahovo (Serbia).⁸³ In addition, sixth-

⁸¹ Gh. Cantea, 'Cercetările arheologice pe dealul Mihai Vodă și împrejurimi', in *Bucureștii de odinioară în lumina săpăturilor arheologice*, ed. by I. Ionașcu (Bucharest, 1959), pp. 33–34. See also Michael Mackensen, 'Amphoren und Spatheia von Golemannovo Kale', in *Die spätantiken Befestigungen von Sadovec (Bulgarien): Ergebnisse der deutsch-bulgarisch-österreichischen Ausgrabungen 1934–1937*, ed. by Syna Uenze (Munich, 1992), pp. 241 and 244.

⁸² Viorel Căpitanu, 'Tezaurul de monede bizantine descoperit la Horgești, jud. Bacău', *Carpica*, 4 (1971), 253–69. For analogies, see Thomas Völling, 'Ein frühbyzantinischer Hortfund aus Olympia', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts: Athenische Abteilung*, 110 (1995), 443; Luan Përzhita, 'Kështjella e Pecës në periudhën e antikitetit të vonë dhe mesjetë (rrethi i Kukësit)', *Iliria*, 20 (1990), 218–19 and 237 pl. 10/1, 2.

⁸³ Mioara Sgîbea-Turcu, 'Fibule din sec. III și VI e.n. descoperite în săpăturile arheologice de la Militari', *Cercetări arheologice în București*, 1 (1963), 379 pl. I. See also Đorđe Janković, 'Pozdneantichnye fibuly VI–VII vekov i slaviane', in *Rapports du III^e Congrès international d'archéologie slave: Bratislava, 7–14 septembre 1975*, ed. by Bohuslav Chropovský, vol. II (Bratislava, 1980), p. 177; Evgeniia Gencheva, 'Za tipologicheskoto razvitiie na kăsnorimskite fibuli s podvito krache v Iuzhna Bălgariia', *Arkheologiya*, 31 (1989), 34. For another example of workshop, see Adrian Bejan, 'Un atelier metalurgic de la Drobeta-Turnu Severin', *Acta Musei Napocensis*, 13 (1976), 257–68.

century sites north of the Danube produced pectoral crosses typically associated with contemporary assemblages on many military sites in the Balkans.⁸⁴ Moulds found in sixth-century forts demonstrate that such crosses were produced locally, but identical moulds were also found on contemporary sites north of the Danube.⁸⁵ Conspicuously rare, however, are military dress accessories associated with Justinian's building program in the northern Balkans, especially belt buckles of the Sucidava class and perforated, so-called 'Martynovka mounts'.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Ioan Mitrea, 'Principalele rezultate ale cercetărilor arheologice din aşezarea de la Davideni (sec. V–VII e.n.)', *Memoria Antiquitatis*, 6–8 (1974–76), 69 and fig. 14/1; Dan Gh. Teodor, *Creştinismul la est de Carpaţi de la origini şi până în secolul al XVI-lea* (Iaşi, 1991), pp. 165 and 125 fig. 7/3; V. D. Baran, 'Die frühslawische Siedlung von Raškov, Ukraine', *Beiträge zur allgemeinen und vergleichenden Archäologie*, 8 (1986), 144 and 91 fig. 7/7. See also Zdenko Vinski, 'Krstoliki nakit epohe seobe naroda u Jugoslaviji', *Vjesnik Arheološkog Muzeja u Zagrebu*, 3 (1968), 103–66; Gordana Marjanović-Vujović, *Krstovi od VI do XII veka iz zbirke Narodnog Muzeja* (Belgrade, 1987).

⁸⁵ Constantin Preda, 'Tipar pentru bijuterii din sec. VI e.n. descoperit la Olteni (r. Videle, reg. Bucureşti)', *Studii şi cercetări de istorie veche*, 18 (1967), 513–15; Victor Teodorescu, 'Centre meşteşugăreşti din sec. V/VI în Bucureşti', *Bucureşti: Materiale de istorie şi muzeografie*, 9 (1972), 95 and 81 fig. 3/6; Dan Gh. Teodor, *Civilizaţia romanică la est de Carpaţi în secolele V–VII (aşezarea de la Botoşana-Suceava)* (Bucharest, 1984), pp. 40–41 and 99 fig. 20/1. For moulds on sixth-century military sites in the northern Balkans, see *Die spätantiken Befestigungen*, ed. by Uenze, p. 164 fig. 9/6. See also Nicolae Dănilă, 'Tipare de turnat cruci din secolele IV–VI, descoperite pe teritoriul României', *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 101 (1983), 557–61.

⁸⁶ For buckles of the Sucidava class, see Zdenko Vinski, 'Kasnoantički starosjedinci u Salonitanskoj regiji prema arheološkoj ostavštini predslavenskog supstrata', *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju Dalmatinsku*, 69 (1967), 38; Joachim Werner, 'Byzantinisches Trachtzubehör des 6. Jahrhunderts aus Heraclea Lyncestis und Caricin Grad', *Starinar*, 40–41 (1989–90), 273–77; Dan Gh. Teodor, 'Piese vestimentare bizantine din secolele VI–VIII în spaţiul carpato-dunăreano-pontic', *Arheologia Moldovei*, 14 (1991), 125; Vladimir Varsik, 'Zu manchen Problemen der Verbreitung byzantinischer Schnallen im mittleren und unteren Donaauraum', in *Actes du XI^e Congrès international des sciences préhistoriques et protohistoriques, Bratislava, 1–7 septembre 1991*, ed. by J. Pavuj, vol. IV (Bratislava, 1993), pp. 208–09; *Die spätantiken Befestigungen*, ed. by Uenze, pp. 185–86; Éva Garam, *Funde byzantinischer Herkunft in der Awarenzeit vom Ende des 6. bis zum Ende des 7. Jahrhunderts* (Budapest, 2001), p. 97. Such buckles appear on many contemporary sites in Western and Eastern Europe, but they are especially frequent on Balkan military sites. Only three specimens are known from the region north of the Lower Danube, two of which are settlement finds. See Alexandru Madgearu, 'The Sucidava Type of Buckles and the Relations between the Late Roman Empire and the Barbarians in the 6th Century', *Arheologia Moldovei*, 21 (1998), 220–21. For 'Martynovka mounts', see Péter Somogyi, 'Typologie, Chronologie und Herkunft der Maskenbeschläge: zu den archäologischen Hinterlassenschaften osteuropäischer Reiterhirten aus der pontischen Steppe im 6. Jahrhundert', *Archaeologia Austriaca*, 71 (1987), 121–54, and Csanád Bálint, 'Kontakte zwischen Iran, Byzanz und der Steppe: Das Grab von

To judge from the existing evidence, the implementation of the fortified frontier strained not only the coin circulation within and outside the Empire, but also economic and political relations between communities living north and south of the Danube frontier, respectively. The interruption of coin circulation between 545 and 565 was most probably accompanied by a strong crisis in trading activities across the Danube and a subsequent scarcity of goods of Roman provenance, which may have been obtained by such means and played an important role as prestige goods. It is because of prestige goods, such as gold, silver, horses, and weapons, that the Sclavene warriors of 581, according to John of Ephesus, were still ravaging the Balkan provinces in 584.⁸⁷ The evidence of amphorae found on sites north of the Danube frontier, many of which are from the second half of the sixth century, points in the same direction. Olive oil, wine, or *garum* were as good for showing off as horses or weapons. However, the Empire was not the only source of prestige goods. Recent studies of the so-called 'Slavic' bow fibulae⁸⁸ revealed multiple and very complicated networks for the procurement of such goods. Ornamental patterns displayed on specimens found in Romania are linked to others from such distant regions as Mazuria (Poland) and Crimea (Ukraine). Like Scandinavian 'monstrous brooches' of the late third century, 'Slavic' bow fibulae started by being exotic enough to produce prestige. The dissemination of bow fibulae to the Lower Danube region, as well as to other areas, is likely to indicate long-distance contacts between communities and to signal the rise of individuals having the ability both to entertain such contacts and to employ craftspersons experienced enough to replicate ornamental patterns and brooch-forms. 'Slavic' bow fibulae were in fashion shortly before and after c. 600, a period during which symbols of personal identity seem to have been in higher demand. Brooch-forms borrowed from other cultural settings were now culturally authenticated and an 'emblemic style' emerged, which existed only in the repetitions and contrasts created by the replication of ornamental patterns and forms. The social meaning attached to these dress accessories may also have been fixed in time, as the rise of Slavic 'kings', many of whom were able to mobilize large numbers of warriors in successful raids across the Danube, necessitated markers of sharper social differentiation.

Üç Tepe (Sowj. Azerbajdžan) und der beschlagverzierte Gürtel im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert', in *Awarenforschung*, ed. by F. Daim, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1992), pp. 395–409; I. O. Gavritukhin and A. M. Oblomskii, *Gaponovskii klad i ego kul'turno-istoricheskii kontekst* (Moscow, 1996), pp. 25–28 and 145–46. 'Martynovka mounts' of Somogyi's classes A1.2 and A2 were produced by means of moulds found during excavations in a residential area of Caričin Grad. See Bernard Bavant, 'Les petits objets', in *Caričin Grad II: Le quartier sud-ouest de la ville haute*, ed. by Bernard Bavant, Vladimir Kondić, and Jean-Michel Spieser (Belgrade, 1990), pp. 221–23 and pl. XXXVIII/209–10.

⁸⁷ John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.6.25, ed. by Brooks.

⁸⁸ Curta, *Making the Slavs*, pp. 247–75; and 'Werner's Class I H of "Slavic" Fibulae Revisited', *Archaeologia Bulgarica*, 8 (2004), 59–78.

'Judges' and 'Kings': Power in Barbarian Societies

The unusual abundance of silver coins and the buildings with stone walls found on several sites in Romania, Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldova are the material culture correlates of the power of the Tervingian 'judges' (*iudices*) mentioned in historical sources. Despite the fact that, at several points during his long confrontation with the Romans, Athanaric appeared to contemporary authors very much like a monarch, Ammianus Marcellinus describes the Tervingian 'judge' as 'urging' and 'persuading' his followers, and not just issuing orders.⁸⁹ He also spoke in the name of his group and established a sense of collective identity in opposition to the Romans. In 369, Athanaric forced Emperor Valens to meet him on a boat in the middle of the Danube, claiming to have sworn an oath not to enter Roman territory. It is possible, as Peter Heather has suggested, that the Tervingi first coalesced around a particularly successful leader of that kind. Indeed, every time they appear in literary sources, in the 330s (when making peace with Constantine the Great), in the late 340s (at the time of the first persecution of Christians), and in the 360s (during Valens's Gothic wars), the Tervingi had an overall leader who acted on behalf of most, if not all of them. Moreover, between c. 330 and 370, all 'judges' belonged to the same kin group, explicitly referred to as a 'royal clan'.⁹⁰ The son of the Tervingian 'judge' defeated by Constantine II, who was sent to Constantinople as a hostage, may well have been Aoric, father of Athanaric, who carried out the persecution of 348. Whoever the leader of the Tervingi was at the time of their first mention in 291, he must have started as *primus inter pares*, because various sources clearly indicate that there were many Tervingian chiefs at any one time.⁹¹ Moreover, according to the *Passion of St Sabas*, one of the most important sources for the Tervingian society of the 360s, the assembly in the saint's village north of the Danube was dominated by a group of prominent individuals who were in charge of the consecration of the sacrificial meat.⁹² This has been rightly interpreted as an indication that these individuals were responsible for cult and rituals, thus standing out by virtue more of their prestige than of economic power.⁹³ By contrast, the power of Atharid, a member

⁸⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 31.15.7–9 and 13, ed. by Seyfarth. See Heather, *Goths*, p. 57.

⁹⁰ Zosimus, *New History* 4.25.2 and 4.34.3, ed. by François Paschoud (Paris, 1971–89).

⁹¹ Eunapius, fr. 55, ed. by R. C. Blockley (Liverpool, 1983); Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.5, ed. by Bidez; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 31.3.8, ed. by Seyfarth. See Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 94. On the contrary, Peter Heather (*Goths and Romans*, p. 121) believes that with Athanaric, 'we are already dealing with a nascent Gothic state, rather than a temporary and amorphous confederation'.

⁹² *Passion of St Sabas* 3.1–4 and 4.1–3, ed. by P. J. Heather and J. F. Matthews (Liverpool, 1991). See also Schwarcz, 'Cult and Religion', p. 450.

⁹³ Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 104.

of the Tervingian elite mentioned in the *Passion* as having ordered his retainers to enforce the persecution of Christians, had a much broader basis, for 'his sway extended over a number of villages, since Atharid appears unfamiliar with local conditions'.⁹⁴ The evidence of the *Passion of St Sabas* thus suggests the coexistence of different forms of political power. This is definitely true for the Sclavenes of the sixth century as well.

The diminution of the quantity of prestige goods during the economic 'closure' of the Danube frontier in the mid-sixth century may have increased the level of social competition and encouraged the rise of leaders whose basis of power was now warfare. There is no indication of Sclavene chiefs before c. 560. No Sclavene raid recorded in Procopius's *Wars* seems to have been organized by military leaders, while a variety of leadership forms appears only during the last quarter of the sixth century. In anthropological terms, that variety may best be described as the coexistence of three different sorts of power. Anthropologists distinguish chiefs, whose powers are largely ascribed and coincide with privileged control of wealth, from big-men, whose powers are achieved and derived from the manipulation of wealth, and great-men, whose powers may be ascribed or achieved, but are not based upon the control of wealth.⁹⁵ Ever since Elman Service defined chiefdoms as 'redistributional societies with a permanent central agency of coordination', chiefs have been viewed as the prevailing characteristics of the social organization in early medieval Europe, which had existed beyond the Roman frontiers and persisted into the migration period.⁹⁶ According to current anthropological views, chiefdoms were regionally organized societies with a centralized decision-making hierarchy coordinating activities among several village communities. Names of Sclavene chiefs appear in Menander the Guardsman, the *Strategikon*, and Theophylact Simocatta. In sharp

⁹⁴ Heather, *Goths*, p. 73.

⁹⁵ Harvey Whitehouse, 'Leaders and Logics, Persons and Politics', *History and Anthropology*, 6 (1992), 118. See also Marshall Sahlins, 'Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 5 (1963), 283–303; Michael Allen, 'Elders, Chiefs, and Big Men: Authority Legitimation and Political Evolution in Melanesia', *American Ethnologist*, 11 (1984), 20–41; Paula Brown, 'Big Man, Past and Present: Model, Person, Hero, Legend', *Ethnology*, 29 (1990), 97–115; Rena Lederman, 'Big Men, Large and Small? Towards a Comparative Perspective', *Ethnology*, 29 (1990), 3–15.

⁹⁶ Elman Service, *Primitive Social Organization* (New York, 1971), p. 134; Richard Hodges, *Dark Age Economics: The Origins of Towns and Trade A.D. 600–1000* (New York, 1982), p. 187; John Haldon, *The State and the Tributary Mode of Production* (London, 1993), p. 213. See also Timothy Earle, 'Chiefdoms in Archaeological and Ethnohistorical Perspective', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 16 (1987), 279–308, and Joan B. Townsend, 'The Autonomous Village and the Development of Chiefdoms', in *Development and Decline: The Evolution of Sociopolitical Organization*, ed. by Henri J. M. Claessen, Pieter van de Velde, and M. Estellie Smith (South Hadley, 1985), pp. 141–55.

contrast to the picture given by Procopius, the author of the *Strategikon* even suggests that Sclavene chiefs may at times unite and accept, albeit temporarily, 'being ruled by one man'.⁹⁷ Some of the warrior leaders mentioned by Theophylact Simocatta, however, seem to have neither ascribed power, nor control of wealth. Instead, Ardagastus and Peiragastus fit well the model of the great-man.⁹⁸ Advancing alone in single combat with any warrior prepared to match his skill and strength, the great-man gained prestige, a name for himself, and admiration, but not wealth. In times of war, his authority was unquestioned; in peacetime, his function disappeared, but his prestige remained.⁹⁹ By contrast, writing in c. 560, Pseudo-Caesarius knew that, though living without the rule of anyone, the Sclavenes often killed their leaders during peacetime, 'sometimes at feasts, sometimes on travel'.¹⁰⁰ This seems to indicate that the strategies Sclavene leaders employed to expand their prominence and draw followings were checked by their kinsmen. Pseudo-Caesarius used this example to show that the Sclavenes were living by their own law and without the rule of anyone (*anegemoneutoi*), a remark that dovetails with the evidence of other sources. That the purge of would-be tyrants took place during feasts further suggests that the leaders in question were not true chiefs. Such leaders with achieved power may best be described as big-men. They organized feasts and festivals and were daring warriors or commanders in warfare, aggressors in interpersonal and inter-group conflict, orators, directors of communal work and enterprise, men of authority who arbitrated disputes within the community, ritual practitioners, magicians, or sorcerers. Some dominated by their physical strength, particularly in contexts where leading warriors were politically important, some by force of character.

The author of the *Strategikon* knew that there were many Sclavene 'kings, always at odds with each other', a useful political detail for any Roman general who happened to wage war on any one of them.¹⁰¹ However, when these 'kings' competed as peers, the stakes must have been prestige, wealth, or even physical well-being of

⁹⁷ *Strategikon* 11.4.30, ed. by Dennis and Gamillscheg. See Matthias Hardt, 'Aspekte der Herrschaftsbildung bei den frühen Slawen', in *Integration und Herrschaft*, ed. by Pohl and Diesenberger, pp. 249–55.

⁹⁸ Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 1.7.3–6; 6.7.1, 3, and 5; 6.9.1 and 6; 7.4.13; 7.5.4, ed. by de Boor and Wirth.

⁹⁹ Maurice Godelier, *The Making of Great Men: Male Domination and Power among the New Guinea Baruya* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 105 and 109–10.

¹⁰⁰ Riedinger, *Pseudo-Kaisarios*, p. 302 ('synechos anairountes synestiomenoi e synodeuontes ton sphon hegemonia kai archonta'). One of the two *termini technici* employed by Pseudo-Caesarius for this kind of leader is *archon*, for which see Jadran Ferluga, 'Archon: Ein Beitrag zur Untersuchung der südslawischen Herrschertitel im 9. u. 10. Jh. in lichte der byzantinischen Quellen', in *Tradition als historische Kraft*, ed. by N. Kamp and J. Wollasch (Berlin, 1982), pp. 254–66.

¹⁰¹ *Strategikon* 11.4.14, ed. by Dennis and Gamillscheg.

their respective social groups, not just the leader's own status. When coming together to face a common threat, they even empowered one of them to speak in the name of all, boldly proclaiming their independence and thus 'creating' their new identity. To the Avar embassy requesting that the Sclavenes recognize the qagan as their ruler and pay him tribute, the Sclavene leader Daurentius (or Dauritas) boldly responded that 'others do not conquer our land, we conquer theirs; and so it shall always be for us, as long as there are wars and weapons'.¹⁰² The sharp contrast between 'us' and 'them' in this particular passage should not mislead us into believing that Daurentius was alone in his boast. When deciding to slay the Avar emissaries, he was backed by his peers, to whom Menander the Guardsmen refers as the 'chiefs of his people' (*hosoi en telei tou ethnous*). Daurentius was thus a prominent leader in a context in which personification or embodiment of collective interest and responsibility was not only possible, but has become a recurrent practice. He played a key role in 'making' the group he represented. His oratorical intervention during the meeting with the Avar envoys transformed his actions that could otherwise have been construed as merely personal into collective ones as well.

Great-men like Ardagastus and big-men like the leaders mentioned by Pseudo-Caesarius represented different responses to the historical conditions resulting from increased social competition caused by the implementation of Justinian's fortified frontier. These forms of power may not only have coexisted, but also have been used by one and the same individual. One way or another, leadership of any permanent kind implied access to prestige goods, the quantity of which, if we are to believe Menander the Guardsman, was considerable. It is because he knew that he would find the land of the Sclavenes 'full of gold' that the qagan of the Avars decided to launch his punitive expedition against Daurentius and his fellow chiefs. The archaeological evidence confirms this picture of growing political power, as artefacts displaying 'emblemic styles', such as 'Slavic' bow fibulae, became popular only during the second half of the sixth century, that is, after the reign of Justinian. Like the 'monstrous brooches' of the late third century, 'Slavic' bow fibulae point to long-distance relations with distant communities, perhaps some form of gift-ex-

¹⁰² Menander the Guardsman, *Historia* fr. 21, ed. by R. C. Blockley (Liverpool, 1985). See P. Yannopoulos, 'Les Slaves chez Ménandre', *Epeteris Hetaireias Byzantinon Spoudon*, 48 (1990–1993), 27–35. Menander's account of this episode was based on some official report, perhaps by John, 'who at this time was governor of the isles and in charge of the cities of Illyricum' and who was responsible for the transportation of the Avar horsemen eventually sent to punish the Sclavene arrogance. The use of an official report as a source is betrayed by Menander's use of the phrase *hosoi en telei tou ethnous* (literally, 'those who headed the people') as an equivalent of *hegemones* (leaders) to refer to Daurentius's peers. This is a phrase commonly employed in Byzantine administration in reference to imperial officials. See Robert Benedicty, 'Prokopios' Berichte über die slavische Vorzeit: Beiträge zur historiographischen Methode Prokopios von Kaisareia', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen byzantinischen Gesellschaft*, 14 (1965), 53.

change or matrimonial alliances. Specimens brought from remote locations into the Lower Danube area were quickly imitated in an effort to respond to an increasing local demand for symbols of a particular kind of group identity. Since ornamental patterns point to long-distance social contacts, the form of identity marked by such means must have cut through regional boundaries. Symbols drawn from 'exotic' milieus may have been culturally authenticated and transformed into 'native' symbols. The production of local series of bow fibulae, some imitating larger or more sophisticated specimens, may illustrate this process. As such 'imports' were 'internalized', emulation of elite styles may have contributed to the dissemination of ornamental patterns. However, beyond emulation 'Slavic' bow fibulae, particularly cruder specimens, without complicated scrollwork ornaments, may have conveyed a message pertaining to group identity. Whether living within the same region or widely scattered, adherence to a brooch style helped integrate isolated individuals within a group whose social boundaries crisscrossed those of local communities. On the other hand, it has long been noted that, unlike other forms of group identity, such as gender or class, ethnicity is to be viewed as an essential orientation to the past, to collective origin, a 'social construction of primordality'.¹⁰³ 'Kernels of tradition' were important factors in making early medieval ethnic groups and traditions become relevant particularly in contexts of changing power relations, which impelled displays of group identity.¹⁰⁴ The inspirations for the decoration of 'Slavic' brooches were fifth-century ornamental patterns, such as the Gáva-Domolospusztá scrollwork,¹⁰⁵ brooch forms of the Aquileia class, or pairs of bird heads. At least bird

¹⁰³ Hoyt S. Alverson, 'The Roots of Time: A Comment on Utilitarian and Primordial Sentiments in Ethnic Identification', in *Ethnic Autonomy – Comparative Dynamics: The Americas, Europe and the Developing World*, ed. by R. L. Hall (New York, 1979), p. 15. See also Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of the Nations* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 15–16 and 28. To Smith, ethnicity is 'a matter of myths, symbols, memories, and values'.

¹⁰⁴ Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen Gentes* (Cologne, 1961), pp. 14–18 etc.; Jörg Jarnut, 'Aspekte frühmittelalterlicher Ethnogenese in historischer Sicht', in *Entstehung von Sprachen und Völkern: Glotto- und ethnogenetische Aspekte europäischer prachen. Akten des 6. Symposions über Sprachkontakt in Europa, Mannheim 1984*, ed. by P. Sture Ureland (Tübingen, 1985), pp. 83–91; Walter Pohl, 'Tradition, Ethnographie und literarische Gestaltung: eine Zwischenbilanz', in *Ethnogenese und Überlieferung: Ausgewandte Methode der Frühmittelalterforschung*, ed. by Karl Brunner and Brigitte Merta (Vienna, 1994), p. 11. See also Walter Pohl, 'Conceptions of Ethnicity in Early Medieval Studies', *Archaeologia Polona*, 29 (1991), 41.

¹⁰⁵ See Volker Bierbrauer, 'Das Frauengrab von Castelbolognese in der Romagna (Italien): Zur chronologischen, ethnischen und historischen Auswertbarkeit der ostgermanischen Fundstoffe des 5. Jahrhunderts in Südosteuropa und Italien', *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums*, 38 (1991), 575. For an example of direct imitation of the Gáva-Domolospusztá scrollwork, see G. F. Korzukhina, 'Klady i sluchainye nakhodki veshchei kruga "drevnostei antov" v srednem Podneprov'e. Katalog pamiatnikov', *Materialy po arkheologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii*, 5 (1996), 402 and 649 pl. 59/1.

heads can be viewed as ‘citations’ from the ‘heroic’ past, for this decoration was typically associated with artefacts dated to the times of Attila’s Hunnic Empire.

Conclusion

The rise of local elites in the fourth as well as in the sixth century coincided in time with the dissemination of ‘emblemic styles’ as markers of some form of group identity. Recent studies revealed an increasing standardization of female burial assemblages dated shortly before and after *c.* 350. Some even argued that this dress style with two brooches on shoulders and a large belt-buckle at the waist was a typically ‘Gothic’ (i.e. Tervingian) fashion.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, although there are no Slavic fibulae *per se*, access to and manipulation of ‘Slavic’ bow brooches may have been strategies for gaining admission into a group of people known to Byzantine authors as ‘Slavs’. Dress accessories were not just symbols of social status or gender, but badges of power. This was the power of those able to establish long-distance relations and thus to wield influence. On the other hand, big-men and chiefs, ‘judges’ and ‘kings’ became prominent especially in contexts in which they embodied collective interest and responsibilities. At least from a Roman point of view, leaders like Athanaric or Daurentius ‘created’ groups by speaking and taking action in the name of their respective communities. Political and military mobilization was the response to the historical conditions created by the implementation of the fortified frontier on the Danube, first during the Tetrarchic period and then, on a much larger scale, in the mid-500s. Both Tervingi and Sclavenes appear in historical sources and retain attention only in relation to the aggressive policies implemented in the Lower Danube region by Roman emperors from Constantine the Great to Maurice. Between 330 and 370 and then, again, between 530 and 610, Roman troops crossed the river and campaigned for several years in barbarian territory. In addition, under Constantine a number of bridge-heads were established on the left bank of the Danube, some of which were again in Roman hands during Justinian’s reign. Furthermore, the Tetrarchic emperors initiated a building program on the Danube frontier, which Justinian later amplified and extended to the entire region of the northern Balkans. Finally, an important consequence of such aggressive political measures was the relatively long interruption of trade relations between regions on both sides of the Danube frontier, which is clearly outlined by the analysis of coin finds. The relative scarcity of artefacts of Roman provenance may explain their use as prestige goods, along with other artefacts of non-Roman, but still ‘exotic’ origin, such as Scandinavian or Mazurian brooches. The cultural authentication and ‘internalization’ of the symbolism attached

¹⁰⁶ Volker Bierbrauer, ‘Archäologie und Geschichte der Goten vom 1.–7. Jahrhundert: Versuch einer Bilanz’, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 28 (1994), 138 and 147. See also Volker Bierbrauer, ‘Archeologia e storia dei Goti dal I al IV secolo’, in *I Goti*, ed. by Volker Bierbrauer, Otto von Hessen, and Ermanno A. Arslan (Milan, 1994), p. 24.

to those *exotica* is coextensive with and constitutes the basis for 'emblemic styles' of material culture, which often have a distinct referent and carry a clear message about conscious affiliation. In this sense, the group identity represented by 'emblemic styles' was a goal-oriented identity, formed by internal organization and stimulated by external pressure.¹⁰⁷ The politicization of cultural differences is, no doubt, one of the most important features of ethnicity.¹⁰⁸ Ever since Fredrik Barth emphasized the transactional nature of ethnic identities, ethnicity is viewed as the combined effect of two mutually interdependent social processes, one of internal, the other of external definition or categorization.¹⁰⁹ Ethnicity thus appears as an 'artefact', created in order to bring together a group of people for some common purpose. There is currently an increasing scholarly concern with the implications of ethnic boundary construction and the meaning of boundary permeability for when, how, and especially why groups selectively fashion distinct trait inventories, symbolize group unity and mobilize members to act for economic or political gain, and 'invent' traditions. 'Emblemic styles' in the fourth and sixth centuries, respectively, must therefore be seen as symptoms of changing social relations requiring display of group identity. Big-men like those in St Sabas's village north of the Danube or like Daurentius, the Sclavene leader attacked by the Avars in 578, employed a variety of strategies to obtain and maintain their positions of power, two of which appear as particularly important for a discussion of ethnicity: feasting and oratorical interventions on behalf of the entire group. Others seem to have perceived symbolically their domain as discretely separated from that of the Roman emperors. In Athanaric's eyes, the river Danube was the physical limit of Roman power, which is why he requested that the negotiations of 369 take place on a boat anchored in the middle of the river. The Tervingi and the Sclavenes thus grew out of 'bits and pieces, human and cultural, that nestled' in borderlands and coalesced around charismatic entrepreneurs, who gathered adherents by using familiar amalgamative metaphors and spiritual symbols, such as ancestral aboriginality or other legitimizing events.¹¹⁰ As ethnic boundaries are usually maintained in order to justify between-group

¹⁰⁷ The path-breaking study of goal-oriented ethnicities is Abner Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns* (London, 1969). For ethnicity as a function of power relations, see Randall McGuire, 'The Study of Ethnicity in Historical Archaeology', *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 1 (1982), 171 and 173; Eugene E. Roosens, *Creating Ethnicity: The Process of Ethnogenesis* (Newbury Park, 1989), p. 158; Thomas Hylland Eriksen, 'The Cultural Contexts of Ethnic Differences', *Man*, 26 (1991), 129.

¹⁰⁸ Eriksen, 'Cultural Contexts', p. 141: ethnicity is the 'collective enaction of socially differentiating signs'.

¹⁰⁹ Richard Jenkins, 'Rethinking Ethnicity: Identity, Categorization and Power', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 17 (1994), 189–223.

¹¹⁰ Chappell, 'Ethnogenesis and Frontiers', p. 272.

competition and negative reciprocity,¹¹¹ Tervingian and Sclavene ethnicities may have been the direct result of the historical circumstances following the implementation of the ‘strongest possible line of first defense’ of the Empire. Whether or not the Goths became Goths ‘only after the Guthonic immigrants had become “Scythians” at the Black Sea’,¹¹² the Tervingi may have first coalesced around some particularly successful member of Athanaric’s ‘royal clan’.¹¹³ By the same token, there are good reasons to believe that the Sclavene ethnicity was an identity formed not in the Pripet marshes of the North, but in the shadow of Justinian’s forts on the Danube.

¹¹¹ Ian Hodder, *Symbols in Action: Ethnoarchaeological Studies of Material Culture* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 85.

¹¹² Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 44.

¹¹³ Heather, *Goths*, p. 58.

The Shadow of a Frontier: The Walachian Plain during the Justinianic Age

EUGEN S. TEODOR

‘Shadow’ is not darkness, but dimmed light. One can see in the shadow, albeit imperfectly. A shadow is not a black spot, but a whole array of gleaming greys. A shadow is a deformed imitation of the illumined object that can thus be guessed, but not seen. This essay is not about ontology, but about history and evanescent ideas, about Walachia during the resplendent age of Emperor Justinian and scholars who, for reasons known only to them, keep on searching for reflections in the shadow.

When, in the 540s, the glorious Emperor began building the great church dedicated to the Holy Wisdom, the only buildings in existence north of the Lower Danube were sunken-floored huts raising just above the grass level, with no more than twenty square metres of floor area for each one of them. The only source of comfort in the interior was clay ovens cut into the walls, on which stood deformed, clumsily decorated pots. Had all people living in huts in the entire Walachian Plain been sold together with all their belongings, it could have barely covered the cost of just one of the many doorways of the magnificent church. That nobody thought of doing just that suggests that it may not have been a very lucrative idea. Few would waste their time studying a culture of such modest means, unless its remains could in some way be linked to the birth of a modern nation or of several nations. For nothing is more appealing to modern scholars than the dawn of a nation, except perhaps its disappearance.

The first discoveries pertaining to this period¹ date back to the 1930s, when the remains of an open settlement were found in a Bucharest suburb in association with a coin minted for Justinian. For lack of a better idea, the author of the excavation

¹ A period most difficult to name, because it was viewed as neither Late Antiquity, nor Middle Ages. ‘The migration period’, a conceptual and chronological extension of the well-known *Völkerwanderungszeit*, is not the best option, but probably the one everybody understands.

attributed the remains to the 'local population'.² At about the same time, a field survey at the opposite, western end of the Walachian Plain produced the remains of two cremation burials (Fig. 1). However, the results of this survey had to wait publication for twenty years, before the burials were attributed, equally arbitrarily, to the Slavs.³ By that time, the evidence (houses, cemeteries) and the issue at stake (either 'local' or 'migratory' populations) had already shaped the archaeological discourse. But the overall picture was far from clear: similar discoveries in the 1950s were for a long time misdated to the twelfth or thirteenth century.⁴ This is not the place for a history of current research, especially since such works are available.⁵ They clearly show that the history of the post-war research in this direction could best be described in terms of reaction and counter-reaction. The Stalinist regime of the 1950s and early 1960s put to work the slogan 'made in Russia', as nothing of importance existed without being attributed to the Slavs. The national-Communist regime encouraged a reverse movement that, beginning with 1964, stressed the 'local population' (the definition of which led to a rather confusing combination of 'Latinist' and 'Thracologist' brands of nationalism) to the detriment of the 'migratory populations', now 'allowed' to settle on Romanian soil only in small numbers and under special circumstances.

² Dinu V. Rosetti, 'Siedlungen der Kaiserzeit und der Völkerwanderungszeit bei Bukarest', *Germania*, 18 (1934), 206–13.

³ Dumitru Berciu and Eugen Comşa, 'Săpăturile arheologice de la Balta Verde şi Gogoşu', *Materiale şi cercetări arheologice*, 2 (1956), 403–05. Some still maintain that the 'local population' may have cremated their dead. See Alexandru Madgearu, *Continuitate şi discontinuitate culturală la Dunărea de Jos în secolele VII–VIII* (Bucharest, 1997), p. 163.

⁴ Petre Diaconu, 'Observaţii asupra ceramicii din secolele XII–XIII de pe teritoriul oraşului Bucureşti', *Studii şi cercetări de istorie veche*, 9 (1958), 451–59.

⁵ Most important in this respect is Victor Teodorescu, 'Despre cultura Ipoteşti-Cindeşti în lumina cercetărilor arheologice din nordul-estul Munteniei (regiunea Ploieşti)', *Studii şi cercetări de istorie veche*, 15 (1964), 485–503. For more recent surveys, see also Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche, 'La culture "Ipoteşti-Cindeşti-Ciurel" (v^e–vii^e siècles): La situation en Valachie', *Dacia*, 28 (1984), 117–84; Radu Harhoiu, 'Forschungsgeschichte und Forschungsstand der frühen Völkerwanderungszeit in Rumänien', *Dacia*, 36 (1992), 99–114; Florin Curta, 'The Changing Image of the Early Slavs in the Rumanian Historiography and Archaeological Literature: A Critical Survey', *Südost-Forschungen*, 53 (1994), 225–310; Eugenia Zaharia, 'La station no. 2 de Bratei, dép. de Sibiu (vi^e–viii^e siècle)', *Dacia*, 38–39 (1994–95), 297–356; Eugen S. Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia de la sfârşitul veacului al V-lea până la mijlocul veacului al VII-lea' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University 'Al. I. Cuza', Iaşi, 2001, now available online at <http://www.mnr.ro/publicat/teze/TTW/index_est.html>); Ioan Stanciu, 'Cercetarea arheologică a epocii migraţiilor şi perioadei de început a epocii medievale timpurii (sec. V–IX p.Chr.) în teritoriul nord-vestic al României', in *Studia Archaeologica et Historica Nicolae Gudea dicata: Omagiu Profesorului Nicolae Gudea la 60 ani*, ed. by Călin Cosma, Dan Tamba, and Aurel Rustoiu (Zalău, 2001), pp. 479–98, and 'Slavii timpurii în cercetarea arheologică românească', *Ephemeris Napocensis*, 11 (2001), 104–43.

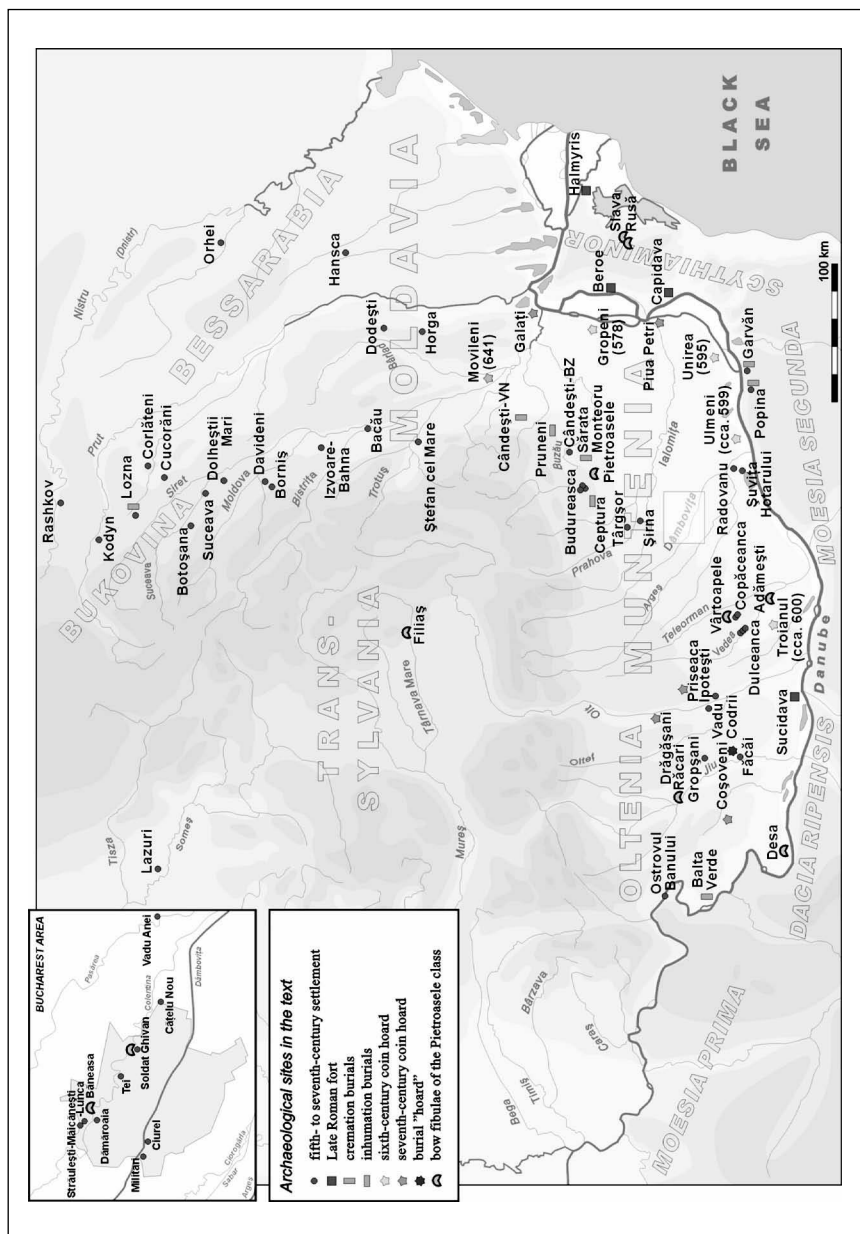


Figure 1. Map distribution of sites mentioned in the text.

It is doubtful that we will ever be able to understand without experiencing a society in which the text was less important than the subtext. The prosecution already has a case⁶ (too harshly formulated, perhaps, to be impartial), but the jury must wait for the final verdict, if justice is ever to be served. It is important to note at this moment that the dossier is far from closed. The inconsistent thesis of Romanian continuity⁷ has recently received harsh criticism from a younger generation of scholars.⁸ It is time now to assess the period with less vehemence, which is easier to write than to do. Since at even a quick glimpse, the Romanian archaeological literature and historiography of this problem is very confusing,⁹ the only solution for the moment is to take yet another look at the archaeological evidence itself.

It is precisely the inconsistency of the historiography of this period and place that made me in launch in 1993 a new program of research based on the mathematical

⁶ Harhoiu, 'Forschungsgeschichte'.

⁷ E.g., Ligia Bârză, *Continuitatea creației materiale și spirituale a poporului român pe teritoriul fostei Dacii* (Bucharest, 1979); Victor Teodorescu, 'Les anciens Roumains', *Roumanie: Pages d'histoire*, 5 (1980), 56–91; Eugenia Zaharia, 'Les Roumains, synthèse de leurs glorieux ancêtres', *Roumanie: Pages d'histoire*, 5 (1980), 210–23; Dan Gh. Teodor, 'Quelques considérations sur la population daco-romaine et ancienne roumaine au nord du Bas-Danube aux IV^e–X^e siècles', *Dacia*, 38–39 (1994–95), 357–63. At stake was much more than just Romanian continuity, as shown, for example, by two reviews of Dan Gh. Teodor, *Teritoriul est-carpatic în veacurile V–XI e.n. Contribuții arheologice și istorice la problema formării poporului român* (Iași, 1978). Compare, for example, Adrian Andronic's review in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie*, 16 (1979), 566–73, to that of Renate Möhlenkamp in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 29 (1980), 135–37. For the problem of continuity in the archaeology of Balkan countries, see Peter Petru, 'Kontinuiteta in diskontinuiteta neselivne v prehodnem obdobju iz kasne antike v zgodnji srednji vek', *Zgodovinski časopis*, 32 (1978), 221–32; Speros Vryonis, 'Some Ethnogenetic Theories of Greeks, Roumanians, Bulgarians, and Turks in 19th–20th Centuries', in *Septième Congrès international d'études du sud-est-européen (Thessalonique, 29 août–4 septembre 1994)* (Athens, 1994), pp. 765–91.

⁸ Most vehemently from Curta, 'Changing Image', and 'Pots, Slavs, and "Imagined Communities": Slavic Archaeology and the History of the Early Slavs', *European Journal of Archaeology*, 4 (2001), 367–84; Ioan Stanciu, 'Așezarea slavă timpurie de la Lazuri—"Lubi tag", jud. Satu Mare (cercetările arheologice din anii 1977, 1993–1995): Contribuții la cunoașterea secolelor 6–7 în zona Tisei superioare', *Studii și comunicări*, 15–16 (1998–99), 115–268. Others are less iconoclastic: Madgearu, *Continuitate și discontinuitate culturală*; Igor Corman, 'L'origine ethnique des Antes fondée sur les découvertes archéologiques dans l'espace d'entre Prout et Dniester', *Arheologia Moldovei*, 19 (1996), 169–89, and *Contribuții la istoria spațiului pruto-nistrian în epoca Evului Mediu timpuriu* (Chișinău, 1998). As insurrection is the state of young minds, it comes as no surprise that more recent developments tend to strike a middle way: Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500–700* (Cambridge, 2001); Stanciu, 'Cercetarea arheologică' and 'Slavii timpurii'.

⁹ For a good description of both contradictions and their political underpinnings, see Curta, 'Changing Image'.

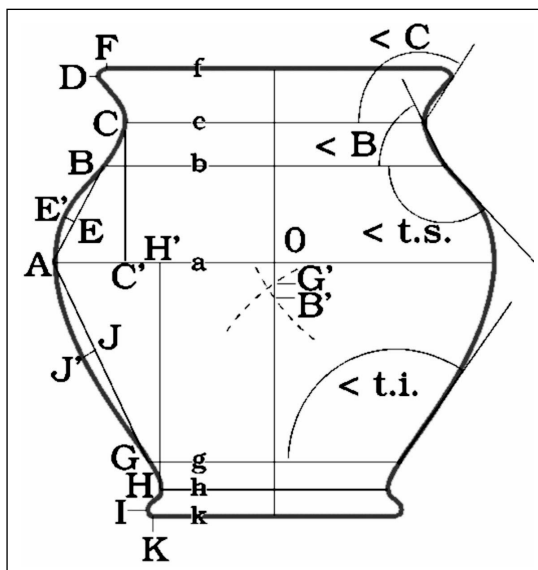


Figure 2. Measurements used in the *Compass System* and mentioned in some graphs: height (kf); upper height (af); lower height (ak); foot height (gk); enlarged foot height or 'sole' (hk); sole ratio (IT) = $(hk:gk)$, multiplied by 100; base diameter (k); average foot height (SP) = $((gk:ak)+(gk:k):2)*100$; rim angle ($< C$); neck angle ($< B$); margin angle difference (SU) = ' $< C$ ' - ' $< B$ '; upper tangent ($< t.s.$); lower tangent ($< t.i.$); tangent difference (St) = ' $< t.s.$ ' - ' $< t.i.$ '

description of pottery design, for pottery is indeed the most abundant artefact category found on almost every sixth-century site excavated in the region (Fig. 2). Since I had only limited access to the rich literature on pottery classification and description, I began by building my own tools: a numerical morphology,¹⁰ an application of

¹⁰ Eugen S. Teodor, *Sistemul Compas: Studiu de morfologie analitică numerică, aplicat ceramicii uzuale din perioada de migrație a slavilor* (Bucharest, 1996). For comparison, see Jacqueline Rigoir and Yves Rigoir, 'Description et dénomination des formes céramiques', *Revue Archéologique du Centre*, 7 (1968), 327–34; V. F. Gening, 'Programma statisticheskoi obrabotki keramiki iz arkheologicheskikh raskopok', *Sovetskaja Arkheologiya*, 1 (1973), 114–35; Petar Stehli and Andreas Zimmermann, 'Zur Analyse neolithischer Gefäßformen', *Archäo-Physika*, 7 (1980), 147–77; M. C. Beaudry, H. M. Miller, and others, 'A Vessel Typology for Early Chesapeake Ceramics: The Potomac Typological System', *Historical Archaeology*, 17 (1983), 18–43; Prudence M. Rice, *Pottery Analysis: A Sourcebook* (Chicago, 1987); U. Kampffmeyer, P. Zamperoni, W.-R. Teegen, and L. Graça, *Untersuchungen zur rechnergestützten Klassifikation der Form von Keramik* (Frankfurt a.M., 1988); Peter Caselitz and Rainer B. Michl, 'Zur formalen Klassifikation von Gefäßen: Eine Studie zur Gruppierungstechnik am Beispiel des eisenzeitlichen Urnengräberfeldes von Wetzten, Kr. Harburg', *Zeitschrift für Archäologie*, 22 (1988), 37–63; Robert Whallon and Lidija Fekeža, 'Kvantitativna analiza oblika grobne keramike ranog srednjeg vijeka sa teritorije Bosne i Hercegovine', *Glasnik zemaljskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine u Sarajevu*, 47 (1992–95), 43–59; Karsten Karstens, *Allgemeine Systematik der einfachen Gefäßformen* (Munich, 1994); Gabriel Fusek, 'Formanalyse vollständiger Gefäße oder ein weiterer Versuch, frühmittelalterliche Keramikgefäße aus der Slowakei zu klassifizieren', in *Slawische Keramik in Mitteleuropa vom 8. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert: Terminologie und Beschreibung. Internationale Tagung in Mikulčice, 24.–26. Mai 1994*, ed. by Lumil Polaček, vol. II (Brno, 1995), pp. 15–33.

that morphology to the estimation of vessel volumes,¹¹ and an alphanumeric system of classification.¹² The main concepts behind this project are the accurate recording, the analytical description, and the computer-assisted classification of ceramic remains. The method has been operationally tested in my Ph.D. dissertation on fifth- to seventh-century ceramic assemblages in southern Romania.¹³ My intention in this essay is to discuss some of the historical conclusions to be drawn from that analysis.

How Romance Is the Material Culture of Sixth-Century Walachia?

Archaeologists refer to the sixth-century material culture of southern Romania as the Ipotești-Cândești culture, a *terminus technicus* coined in the 1960s to describe the continuation of Roman culture following the abandonment of the province Dacia.¹⁴

¹¹ Eugen S. Teodor, 'Introducere în volumetria ceramicii secolului VI la nordul Dunării de Jos', *Arheologia medievală*, 2 (1998), 21–50. For comparison, see Gabriel Fusek, *Slovensko vo včasnioslovanskom období* (Nitra, 1994); Louise M. Senior and Dunbar P. Birnie, 'Accurately Estimating Vessel Volume from Profile Illustrations', *American Antiquity*, 60 (1995), 319–34; Michael E. Whalen, 'Ceramic Size Estimation from Sherds: An Experiment and a Case Study', *Journal of Field Archaeology*, 25 (1998), 218–27.

¹² Eugen S. Teodor, 'Sistemul Compas (II): Subsistemul alfanumeric', *Arheologia Moldovei*, 21 (1998), 239–75. For comparison, see Hélène Balfet, Marie-France Fauvet-Berthelot, and S. Monzon, *Lexique et typologie des poteries: pour la normalisation de la description des poteries* (Paris, 1989); J. Kunow, *Vorschläge zur systematischen Beschreibung der Keramik* (Cologne, 1986); Gao Liming, Luo Hongjie, and John Wilcock, 'The Analysis of Ancient Chinese Pottery and Porcelain Shapes: A Study of Classical Profiles from the Yangshao Culture to the Qing Dynasty Using Computerised Profile Data Reduction, Cluster Analysis and Fuzzy Boundary Discrimination', in *Computer Applications and Quantitative Methods in Archaeology 1989*, ed. by Sebastian Rahtz and Julian Richards (Oxford, 1989), pp. 363–74; Clive Orton, Paul Tyers, and Alan Vince, *Pottery in Archaeology* (Cambridge, 1993).

¹³ Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia'. Southern Romania, in this context, refers to what is otherwise known as Walachia, the region bounded by the Carpathian Mountains to the north and the Lower Danube to the south and subdivided by the river Olt (a northern tributary of the Danube) into Oltenia (also known as Little Walachia) to the west and Muntenia (Great Walachia) to the east of that river.

¹⁴ The literature on this problem is vast. For a quick reference, see Margareta Constantiniu, 'Elemente romano-bizantine în cultura materială a populației autohtone din partea centrală a Munteniei în secolele VI–VII', *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche*, 17 (1966), 665–78; Ion Nestor, 'Problèmes concernant les rapports entre les Slaves et la population autochtone en Roumanie', in *I. Międzynarodowy kongres archeologii słowiańskiej. Warszawa 14–18 IX 1965*, ed. by Witold Hensel, vol. III (Wrocław, 1970), pp. 174–76; Victor Teodorescu, 'La civilisation Ipotești-Cândești (V–VII^e s.)', in *Actes du VII^e Congrès international des sciences préhistoriques et protohistoriques; Prague 21–27 août 1966*, ed. by Jan Filip, vol. II (Prague, 1971), pp. 1041–44; Gheorghe Diaconu, 'Despre denumirea și cronologia unor culturi din Dacia romană și regiunile extracarpătice', *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie*, 30

It goes without saying that there are no cities, well-maintained roads, or *basilicae* in post-Roman Dacia. To posit Roman continuity is to point to *certain* categories of material culture, such as pottery, or to infer from such artefacts as pectoral crosses and moulds the existence of a 'popular' (i.e. non-organized) form of Christianity. Indeed, the idea that the material culture north of the Lower Danube is 'Romance' (i.e. post-Roman, but still Roman in 'essence') is based on a simple fact. Before the middle of the fifth century, the Grey Ware testified to the well-organized pottery production in territories north of the Lower Danube that in post-Roman times were controlled by Germanic tribes. After c. 450, that pottery disappeared and was replaced by sand-tempered, reddish wares, still manufactured on the wheel.¹⁵ The fabric and morphology of this pottery is in essence Roman, not Slavic, for the early Slavs, so it was thought, had no knowledge of wheel-made pottery. Problems emerge, however, from the incongruence between this ceramic category and the pottery found on contemporary sites south of the Danube, within territories that were certainly under Roman control at that time.¹⁶ In other words, the pottery found in assemblages of the Ipotești-Cândești culture, although of Roman tradition, has little, if anything, to do with the Roman pottery of its own age. The former is in fact a pottery produced outside the Roman Empire, with no contact with centres of ceramic production, although still 'in the tradition' of Roman pottery. Since such traditions could not have had any meaning to either Germanic tribes or the Slavs, the only other people capable of producing this pottery must have been the descendants of the Roman colonists brought to Dacia by Emperor Trajan in the early 100s.

In a nutshell, here lies the main fallacy of the continuity theory. For wheel-made pottery is not the only ceramic category represented in assemblages of the Ipotești-Cândești culture. Almost half of all pots found on sites attributed to this culture are handmade, although the ratio to wheel-made pottery may vary considerably from one site to the other. If wheel-made pottery bespeaks the presence of the Romance population, then who made the 'barbarian' pottery? Could this be the work of the 'heirs of Rome'? The answer must be negative, if the link between wheel-made pottery and Romance population is taken for granted. For the old school of archaeology pottery technology was a fetish, and the presence of handmade pottery on Roman or post-Roman sites attributed to the Romance population was viewed as 'unnatural'. Even

(1979), 547–53; Ligia Bârză and Stelian Brezeanu, *Originea și continuitatea românilor: Arheologie și tradiție istorică* (Bucharest, 1991); Ștefan Olteanu, *Societatea carpato-danubiano-pontică în secolele IV–XI: structuri demo-economice și sociale* (Bucharest, 1997).

¹⁵ This is not a novel category, since it appears, albeit in small quantities, in fourth-century ceramic assemblages. See Ligia Bârză, *Continuitatea populației autohtone din Transilvania în secolele IV–V (Cimitirul 1 de la Bratei)* (Bucharest, 1973); Bucur Mitrea and Constantin Preda, *Necropole din secolul al IV-lea în Muntenia* (Bucharest, 1966), esp. p. 131.

¹⁶ The difference is easy to spot at close visual inspection, and a more detailed analysis of vessel morphology confirms that distinction. See Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia', especially subchapter 5.1 and chapters 11 and 16.

when, for a while, the pottery found in assemblages of the Ipotești-Cândești culture was dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century, the wheel-made category was attributed to Romanians and the handmade one to Cumans.¹⁷ The mixing of the two categories was interpreted as reflecting the coexistence of the two ethnic groups. When the dating was corrected, the interpretation changed accordingly: the former category now represented the Romance population, while the handmade one was attributed to the Slavs, with peaceful coexistence still as the only possible solution.¹⁸ Most Romanian archaeologists fully embraced this interpretation.¹⁹ Only a few seem to have been

¹⁷ Sebastian Morintz and Gheorghe Cantacuzino, 'Săpăturile arheologice din sectorul Mihai Vodă', in *Studii și referate privind istoria României*, vol. I (Bucharest, 1954), pp. 322–409; Diaconu, 'Observații'.

¹⁸ Sebastian Morintz and Petre Roman, 'Săpăturile de pe dealul Ciurel', *Materiale și cercetări arheologice*, 8 (1962), 761–67. This interpretation was quickly adopted and promoted by the intellectual father of the Romanian school of medieval archaeology, Ion Nestor. See his 'Cîteva considerații cu privire la cea mai veche locuire a slavilor pe teritoriul RPR', in *Omagiul lui P. Constantinescu-Iași cu prilejul împlinirii a 70 ani* (Bucharest, 1965), pp. 147–51, and 'Les éléments les plus anciens de la culture slave dans les Balkans', in *Simpozijum 'Predslavenski etnički elementi na Balkanu u etnogenezi južnih Slovena', održan 24–26. oktobra 1968 u Mostaru*, ed. by Alojz Benac (Sarajevo, 1969), pp. 141–47. At the time, the sharp contrast between Romance and Slavic populations made any other interpretation impossible. It was indeed widely accepted that all Dacians, including those left outside the former province of Dacia, had been thoroughly Romanized by AD 500. However, some were quick to point out the remarkable similarities between 'Dacian' pottery and that found in Ipotești-Cândești assemblages. See, for example, Maria Comșa, 'Sur l'origine et l'évolution de la civilisation de la population romane et ensuite protoroumaine aux VI^e–X^e siècles sur le territoire de la Roumanie', *Dacia*, 12 (1968), 356 (although the examples chosen for fig. 1/1–12 are rather disappointing). Victor Teodorescu ('O nouă cultură arheologică recent precizată în țara noastră, cultura Ipotești-Cîndești (sec. V–VII)', in *Sesiunea de comunicări științifice a muzeelor de istorie, dec. 1964*, vol. II (Bucharest, 1971), p. 107), even called 'Carpian' the eastern and 'Dacian' the western area of the Ipotești-Cândești culture.

¹⁹ Exemplary in that respect is Mircea Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 'Considérations sur le problème des périodes de la culture matérielle en Moldavie aux VI–X^e siècles', *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 6 (1967), 183. For a relatively more cautious approach, see Maria Comșa's studies, e.g., 'Contribution à la question de la pénétration des Slaves au sud du Danube durant les VI^e–VII^e siècles d'après quelques données archéologiques de Dobroudja', in *I. Międzynarodowy kongres archeologii słowiańskiej*, ed. by Hensel, III, 322–30; 'Unele date cu privire la Banatul de sud în sec. IV–VII', in *In memoriam Constantini Daicoviciu* (Cluj, 1974), pp. 85–97; and 'Slawen und Awaren auf rumänischem Boden, ihre Beziehungen zu der bodenständigen und späteren frühromänischen Bevölkerung', in *Die Völker Südosteuropas im 6. bis 8. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Bernhard Hänsel (Berlin, 1987), pp. 219–30. At times, however, even Comșa endorsed the standard ethnic attribution, e.g. in her 'Socio-Economic Organisation of the Dacoromanic and Slav Population on the Lower Danube during the 6th and 7th Centuries', in *Relations Between the Autochthonous Population and the Migratory Populations on the Territory of Romania*, ed. by Miron Constantinescu, Ștefan Pascu, and Petre Diaconu (Bucharest, 1975), pp. 171–200.

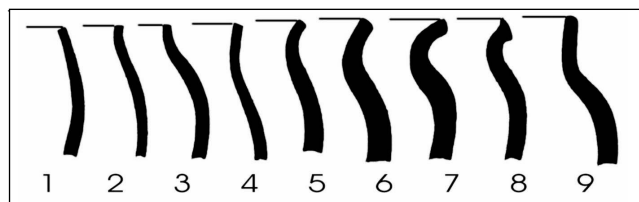


Figure 3. Cross sections of pots from Korchak, in chronological order.

Types 1 to 3 have been dated to the sixth century
(after Rusanova, *Slavianskie drevnosti*, p. 19 with fig. 7).

aware that some of the handmade shapes are close imitations of wheel-made pots.²⁰ The overall picture was not very convincing: the Slavs were everywhere, on every site in the lowlands, but always in minority and extreme poverty (for 'Slavic' assemblages were viewed as typically 'poor').²¹ The conquering Slavs were thus forced to live in ghettos patiently waiting for their assimilation into the Romanian nation.

The ceramic shapes usually attributed to the Slavs are often those without everted rims,²² a feature otherwise viewed as typical for the Slavic pottery of the late fifth and early sixth centuries (Fig. 3). It did not matter much that such archaic features were absent from sites dated to the second half of the sixth century,²³ nor was it of any importance that such shapes were sometimes associated with pottery with incised signs (simple crosses, sometimes followed by wavy lines, or swastikas),²⁴ with handmade lids imitating older, wheel-made specimens,²⁵ or with similar wheel-made

²⁰ The first one to do so was Ion Nestor, 'Cîteva considerații', p. 175, followed by his student, Dan Gh. Teodor, most recently in his 'Slavii la nordul Dunării de Jos în secolele VI–VII d.H.', *Arheologia Moldovei*, 17 (1994), 223–51. More often than not, this was interpreted as a sign of the ethnic assimilation of the Slavs.

²¹ Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche, *Așezări din secolele III și VI e.n. în sud-vestul Munteniei: Cercetările de la Dulceanca* (Bucharest, 1974), pp. 64–65; Dolinescu-Ferche, 'La culture "Ipotești-Cîndești-Ciurel"', pp. 129–30, 137, 144, and fig. 7/1–12; Teodor, 'Slavii la nordul Dunării', pp. 230–31. See also Comșa, 'Socio-Economic Organisation', p. 339.

²² E.g., potsherds from Dulceanca, viewed as 'Slavic': Dolinescu-Ferche, *Așezări*, figs 7, 52/4, and 70/2; Teodor, 'Slavii la nordul Dunării', fig. 6/6.

²³ Elsewhere, such shapes have been dated after the mid-sixth century, without, however, being viewed as 'typical'. See Michał Parczewski, *Die Anfänge der frühslawischen Kultur in Polen* (Vienna, 1993), figs 8/2, 9/2, 13/1, 17/1 (all vessels from sites in southern Poland). See also Irina P. Rusanova, *Slavianskie drevnosti VI–VII vv. Kultura prazhskogo tipa* (Moscow, 1976), pp. 26–27 (table III with cross sections 1–3). Rusanova's type 1 with no neck or lip and dated by her to the fifth century is well represented in ceramic assemblages from Târgșor and Dulceanca.

²⁴ Dolinescu-Ferche, *Așezări*, fig. 7/14, 17. See below.

²⁵ Dolinescu-Ferche, *Așezări*, fig. 52/5.

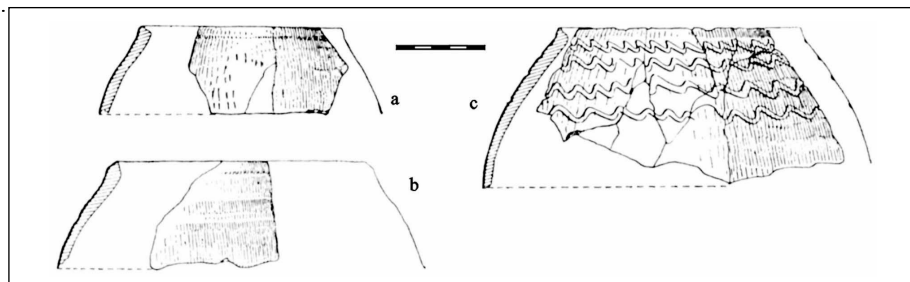


Figure 4. Wheel-made pottery from Târgșor, early sixth century.

shapes viewed as ‘early’.²⁶ Instead, what mattered was the loosely defined analogy with Rusanova’s types 1 to 3 from the Ukrainian site at Korchak (Figs 3, 4, and 5).²⁷

Several other stereotypes are deeply entrenched in the discourse of Romanian archaeologists. Take, for example, the crushed-shard tempered pottery, often viewed as typically Slavic.²⁸ It has long been recognized that while crushed-shard temper appears in the central and north-eastern area of the Ipotești-Cândești culture, such pottery is absent from sites in western Muntenia. It is therefore amazing that Victor Teodorescu, the Romanian archaeologist who ‘invented’ the Ipotești-Cândești culture and worked for several years in Târgșor, never noticed that on that site crushed shards also served as temper for both sixth-century wheel-made pots and the handmade pottery found in third-century assemblages (Fig. 4). Similarly, such identifiers of early Slavic ethnicity as the decoration of finger impressions on the lip or clay pans (flat handmade vessels of circular shape) turned out later to be no more than a red herring. It is now clear that finger impressions on the lip appear on pots found in much earlier assemblages (some of which were wheel-made),²⁹ while sixth-

²⁶ Diaconu, ‘Despre denumirea și cronologia unor culturi’, fig. 3/4, an example from Târgșor, a site commonly viewed as exemplary for the early phase of the Ipotești-Cândești culture.

²⁷ Rusanova, *Slavianskie drevnosti VI–VII vv.*, p. 19 fig. 7.

²⁸ Rusanova, *Slavianskie drevnosti VI–VII vv.*, p. 12. See also I. A. Rafalovich, *Slaviane VI–IX vekov v Moldavii* (Kishinev, 1972), p. 137. This idea seems to have been generally adopted by Romanian archaeologists. See Teodor, ‘Slavii la nordul Dunării’, p. 231. Others noticed that the pottery commonly classified as ‘Prague-type’ is not tempered with crushed shards, a remark further ‘developed’ into a technological distinction between the Prague and the Korchak types. See Comșa, ‘Sur l’origine et l’évolution’, p. 356.

²⁹ As in Gropșani, see Gheorghe Popilian and Marin Nica, *Gropșani: Monografie arheologică* (Bucharest, 1998), p. 113. Curta’s map distribution of pottery finds with either finger impressions or notches on lip clearly indicates that the main concentration of such finds is in Moldavia, not in Ukraine or Poland. This may well be a Dacian or Sarmatian tradition of pottery decoration. See Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, p. 292 fig. 69. For the relative scarcity of pots with such decoration in ceramic assemblages in Poland, see also Renata Madyda-Legutko and Krzysztof Tunia, ‘Die ersten Spuren der frühslawischen Besiedlung in den West-Besiden’, *Archaeoslavica*, 1 (1991), 85.

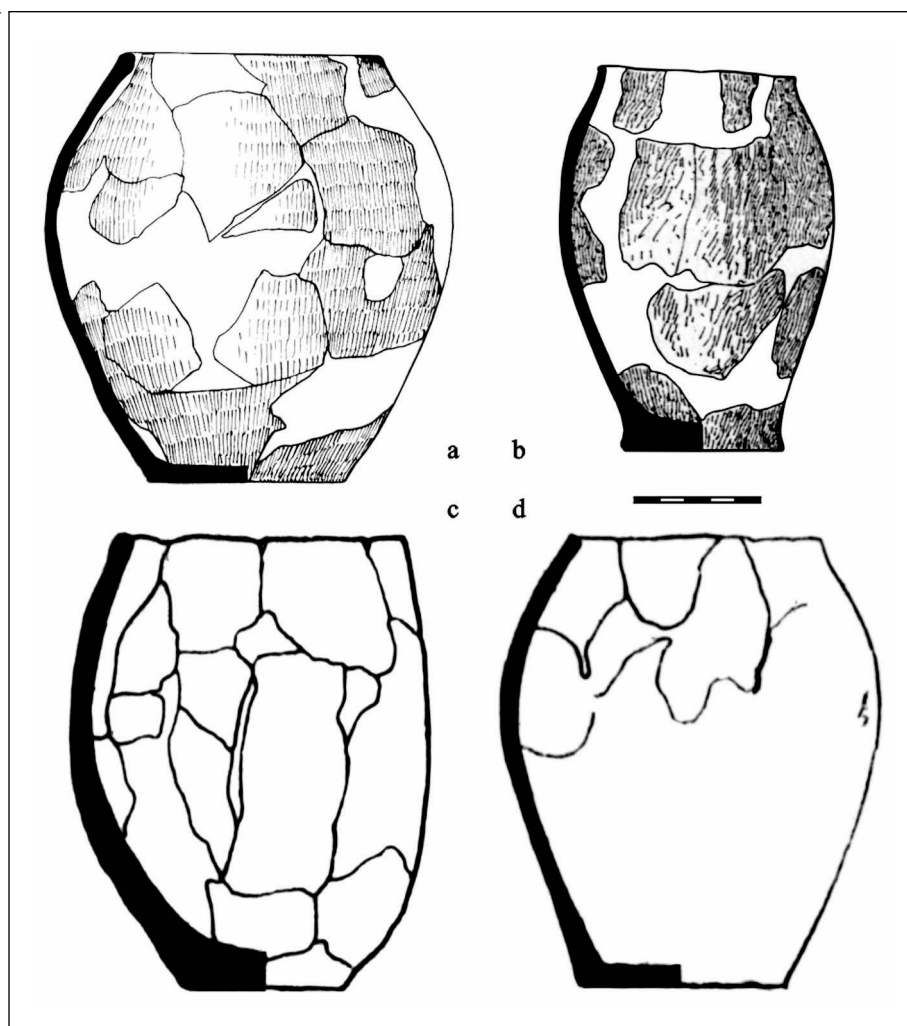


Figure 5. Handmade pottery from Târgșor (a, b) and Dulceanca 1 (c, d).

century clay pans appear more frequently on sites in southern Romania than in Ukraine or Poland.³⁰

³⁰ Clay pans are rare in sixth-century assemblages from Ukrainian or Polish sites, but their number increases considerably during the subsequent centuries. So far, only two specimens have been found in Slovakia that could be dated with some degree of certainty to the sixth century, and only one is known from Poland. At Korchak (Ukraine), there are only two specimens for the first half of the sixth century, eight for the second, and the number goes up for the following centuries. By contrast, the opposite is true for Walachia. Although not

As for archaeologists from neighbouring Slavic-speaking countries, they seem to have taken from summaries in foreign languages whatever happened to match their own interpretations.³¹ As a consequence, in most studies dedicated to this problem and published abroad, Muntenia appears as part of the great Slavic *Urheimat*.³² However, there is not much to support such claims. First and foremost, the handmade pots found in sixth-century assemblages from southern Romania have nothing in common with the Slavic pottery of that same age (Figs 6, 7, and 8). For example, the average rim angle (measured from the neck diameter) is 94 degrees for Ukrainian specimens, 96 for those found in Poland, 98 for Slovakia, 99 degrees for Bohemia, but 109 degrees for Muntenia.³³ The average vessel capacity is 3.138 litres in Korchak (Ukraine), 3.685 litres for Polish sites, 4.104 litres for Slovakia, but just 2.6 litres for Muntenia. Figure 6 clearly illustrates this contrast. The X coordinate corresponds to the margin difference angle (defined as the difference between rim and neck angle, the latter measured from the inflection point to the neck diameter); the Y coordinate shows the tangents difference (the difference between tangents from both inflection points; see Fig. 2 above). The four comparative series are from two settlements excavated in Bucharest (Soldat Ghivan Street and Ciurel), from the Ukrainian site at Korchak, and a selection of pots from sites attributed to the Pen'kovka culture.³⁴

So, how Romance was the material culture of sixth-century Walachia? Despite some widely spread, but preconceived ideas, the answer is neither short nor simple. The study of the published pottery shows an intricate picture. In Oltenia Romanization was an accomplished fact by 500. There are just a few shapes (under ten per cent of the corpus) of Dacian tradition, most others are of clearly Roman inspiration.

present in every ceramic assemblage, most known specimens were found on earlier sites, while being absent from those of the late Ipotești-Cândești culture. Curta's map distribution of sixth- to seventh-century clay pans (although not showing some of the recently published sites) speaks for itself. See Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, p. 297 fig. 72.

³¹ A major handicap of current research in Slavic archaeology is the linguistic barrier. Most consecrated Romanian archaeologists used to write in French, and their colleagues from Slavic countries in either German or Russian.

³² Rusanova, *Slavianskie drevnosti VI–VII vv.*, pp. 189 and 199; Vladimir D. Baran, 'Prazhskaia kul'tura', in *Etnokul'turnaia karta territorii Ukrainskoi SSR v I tys. n.e.*, ed. by V. D. Baran, R. V. Terpilovskii, and E. V. Maksimov (Kiev, 1985), p. 80; Rasho Rashev, *Prabългарите през V–VII век* (Sofia, 2000), p. 191; Paul Barford, *The Early Slavs: Culture and Society in Early Medieval Eastern Europe* (London, 2001), maps II to IV.

³³ Averages are the result of hundreds of measurements taken from several sites in each country.

³⁴ Soldat Ghivan Street: Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche and Margareta Constantiniu, 'Un établissement du VI^e siècle à Bucarest', *Dacia*, 25 (1981), 289–329. Ciurel: Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche, 'Ciurel, habitat des VI–VII^e siècles d.n.è.', *Dacia*, 23 (1979), 179–230. Korchak: Irina P. Rusanova, *Slavianskie drevnosti VI–IX vv. mezhdru Dneprom i zapadnym Bugom* (Moscow, 1973). Selection of Pen'kovka pottery: Rusanova, *Slavianskie drevnosti VI–VII vv.*, fig. 34/1–24.

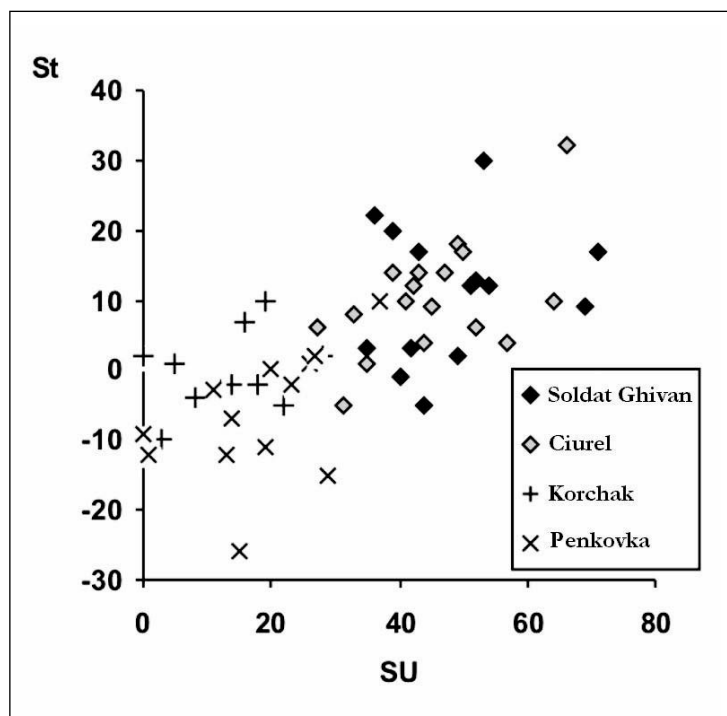
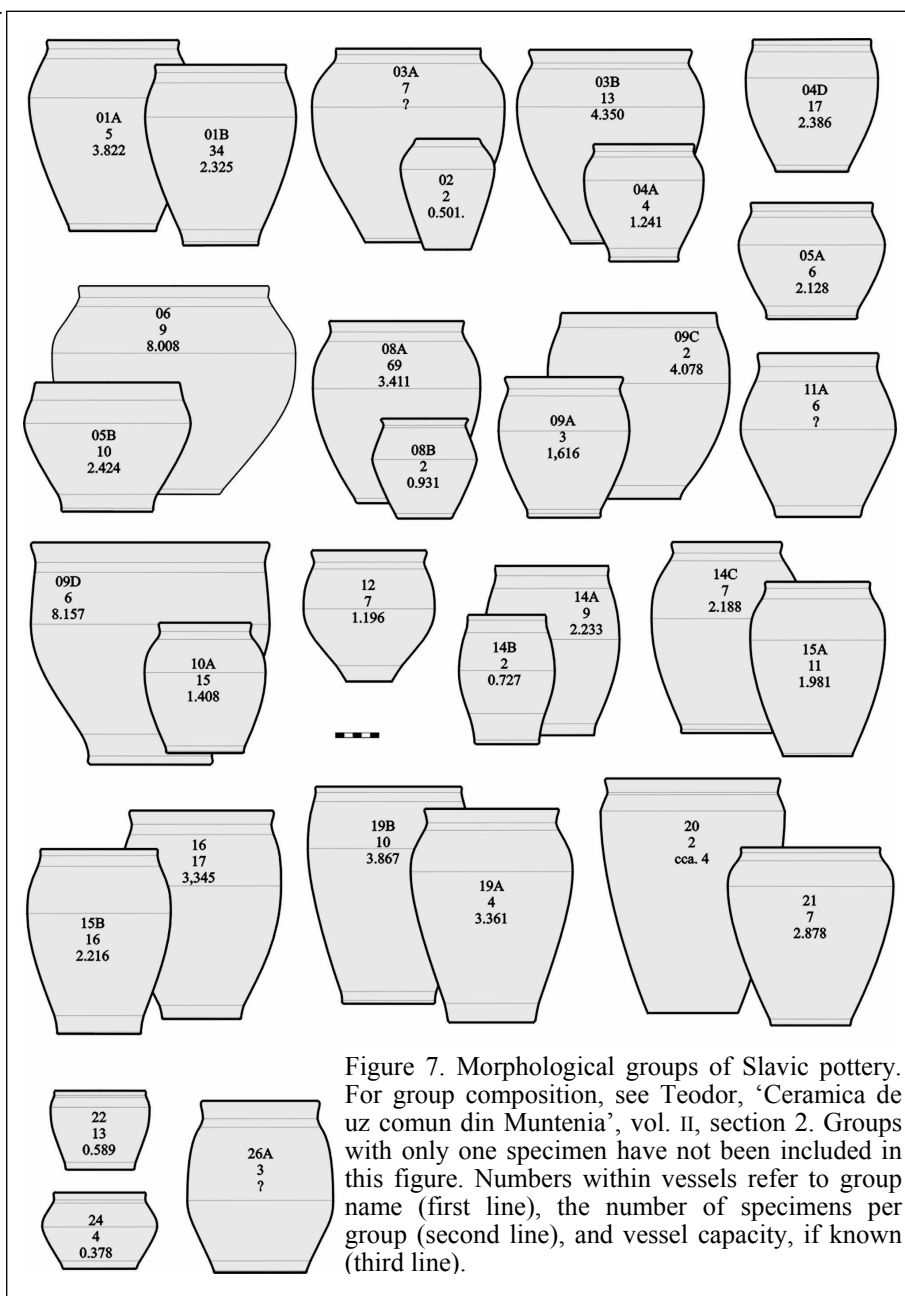


Figure 6. Rim and neck angles of pots from assemblages in Walachia (Soldat Ghivan and Ciurel) compared to samples from Korchak and Pen'kovka assemblages. For abbreviations and bibliography, see Fig. 2 and note 34, respectively.

Moreover, the vessel volumes in this part of Walachia seem to follow Roman units of capacity, with morphological distinctions thus corresponding to functional groups (vessels for storage of liquids, vessels for storage of solid food, or kitchen vessels) most familiar from the traditional Roman table- or kitchenware. Across the Olt River, in western Muntenia, about two thirds of all vessels have shapes of Roman tradition, but a significant number of much older forms go back to either the Dacian or the Sarmatian pottery of the first centuries AD.³⁵ Farther to the east, in the Argeş

³⁵ Most significant in this respect are the ceramic assemblages from the three settlements excavated in Dulceanca: Dolinescu-Ferche, *Așezări*; Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche, 'Contributions archéologiques sur la continuité daco-romaine. Dulceanca, deuxième habitat du VI^e siècle d.n.è.', *Dacia*, 30 (1986), 121–54; Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche, 'Habitats du VI^e et VII^e siècles de notre ère à Dulceanca IV', *Dacia*, 36 (1992), 125–77. Equally relevant are sites on which only trial excavations have been carried out. See, for instance, Petre Roman and Suzana Ferche, 'Cercetările de la Ipotești (jud. Olt)', *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie*, 29 (1978), 73–93.



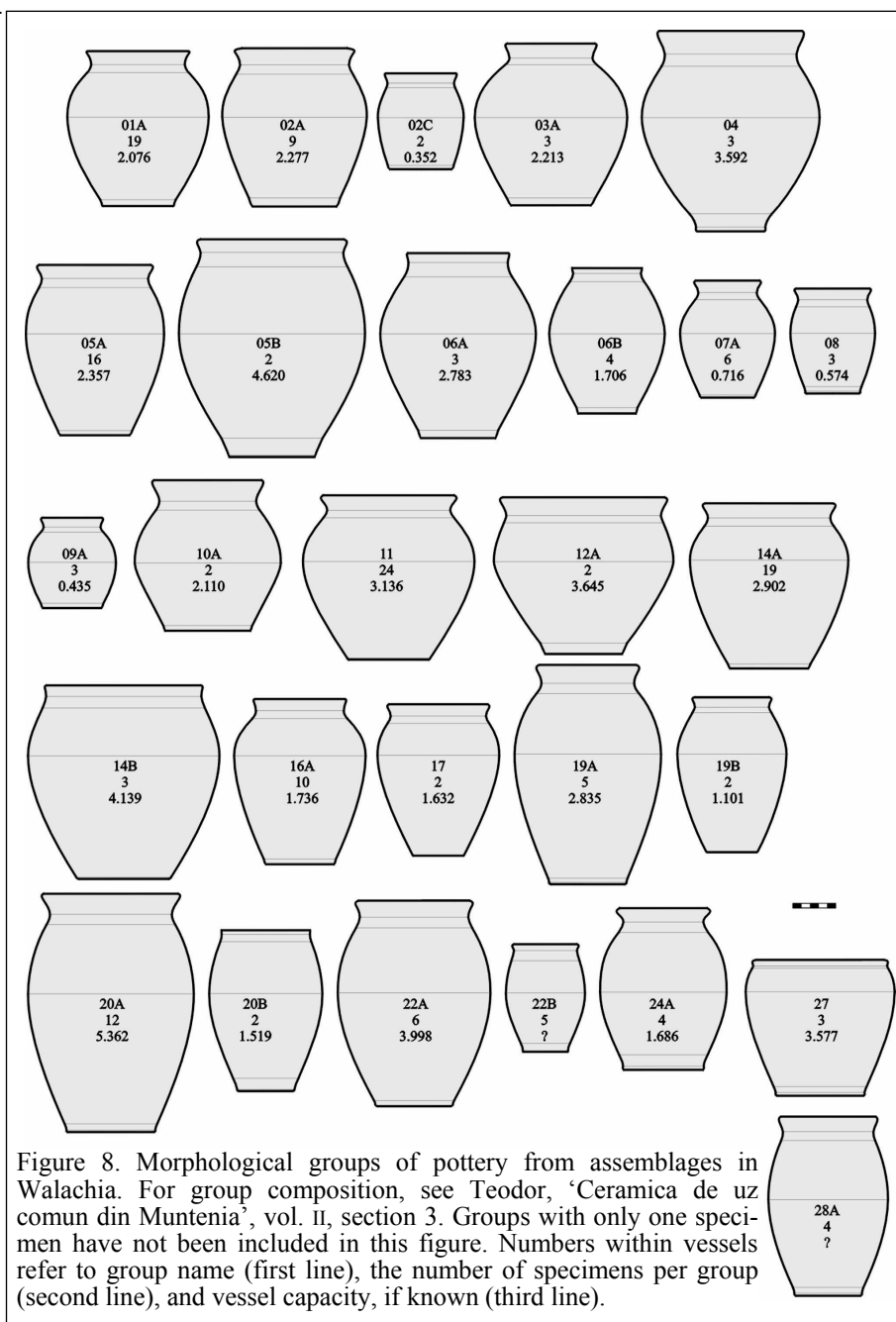


Figure 8. Morphological groups of pottery from assemblages in Walachia. For group composition, see Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia', vol. II, section 3. Groups with only one specimen have not been included in this figure. Numbers within vessels refer to group name (first line), the number of specimens per group (second line), and vessel capacity, if known (third line).

region, the picture is even more complicated. Each settlement excavated in Bucharest represents a separate case. Ever since 1958, it has become fashionable to treat the Ciurel settlement as some kind of power centre of the migratory Slavs.³⁶ To be sure, Ciurel is not the best choice for that distinction. If anything, the ceramic assemblage from this small site points to a much-isolated community. Most shapes are of Roman tradition, but with only few direct analogies in contemporary assemblages. Moreover, most analogies are with assemblages in western Muntenia (especially with Dulceanca 2), not with neighbouring settlements on the territory of modern Bucharest. Judging from the ceramic evidence, it looks as if each community chose to recycle the Roman repertoire of vessel shapes according to its own rules or tastes. More complex social relations may have developed along major rivers.³⁷ Ciurel is on the Dâmbovița River,³⁸ and thus completely isolated from settlements located just a couple of miles away to the north-east, on the Colentina River. What separated these settlements was perhaps a large swamp, now completely drained.³⁹ West of the middle Dâmbovița, in the urban area of modern Bucharest, there are four other rivers running in parallel, the Ciorogârla, the Sabar, the Argeș, and the Neajlov. No sixth-century find is known from this area (see the insert on Fig. 1), which strongly suggests the existence of a large marsh, given that sixth-century sites cluster beyond this area, along the Vedeia and Teleorman rivers, as well as in the northern half of modern Bucharest. The sixth-century landscape of the Walachian Plain was thus a combination of densely forested areas (most famous until well into the eighteenth century) with marshy and steppe-like zones (as in the Bărăgan steppe to the east or in southern Oltenia). This may explain not only the striking isolation of several neighbouring communities, but also the strategic problems encountered by Roman armies campaigning in this region.⁴⁰

³⁶ Diaconu, 'Observații', and 'Cui aparține cultura Ciurel?', *Istros*, 10 (2000), 491–93.

³⁷ This idea was first advanced by Maria Comșa, 'Les formations politiques (cnézats de la vallée) du VI^e siècle sur le territoire de la Roumanie', *Prace i materialy Muzeum Archeologicznego i Etnograficznego w Łodzi*, 25 (1978), 109–17.

³⁸ Unfortunately, the Militari site, which is also on the Dâmbovița, less than a mile upstream from Ciurel, remains unpublished. It is therefore not possible to link Ciurel to any other contemporary settlement at a microregional level.

³⁹ Salvage excavations in the downtown area of modern Bucharest (1996–97) fully substantiate this hypothesis.

⁴⁰ Campaigning north of the Danube River was such a nasty business that Justinian thought of it as an alternative to capital punishment. A law of 538 dealing with the collection of taxes in Egypt threatened officers refusing to assist the tax collectors with transfer to the region north of the river Danube, 'in order to watch at the frontier of that place'. See *Codex Iustinianus*, Edict 13, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. by Paul Krüger, vol. II (Berlin, 1954), p. 785. The presence of swampy areas in the immediate vicinity of the Danube, most likely in the region of present-day Bucharest is also indicated by what the author of the *Strategikon* has to say about the military abilities of the Sclavenes. Roman officers were advised to pay attention to the ability of Sclavene warriors to remain under water for several hours, breathing through

The cluster of settlements in the Colentina valley displays a comparatively small number of shapes of Roman tradition. At Bucharest-Soldat Ghivan Street, vessels of Roman inspiration represent no more than two fifths of the entire assemblage, with the remaining vessels divided between Dacian and Sarmatian traditions (most typical for the Walachian Plain) and an eastern influence that can be distinguished only to the east of the Colentina River. The strongest presence of the latter was identified at Străulești-Lunca and Străulești-Măicănești. Most typical for these two settlements are handmade, tall pots⁴¹ whose direct analogies are to be found in the ceramic repertoire of the Carpiian culture. The impression one gets from examining this pottery is that the fine grey wheel-made ware of the third century may have long been gone,⁴² but its peculiar shapes are still recognizable and, despite the Roman influence, they continued to be copied by hand shaping. To be sure, wheel-made pots are also present on these sites, but there are no handmade imitations of contemporary wheel-made pots. It all looks as if the Roman influence was just beginning to impress itself on the local production of pottery.

The archaeological investigation of northern Muntenia was quite extensive during the last century or so. The situation, however, is far from clear, due to poor publication. To take just two most famous examples: Căndești, the site that gave its name to the archaeological culture, and the great cemetery at Sărata Monteoru (both in the Buzău district) still await their publication. In the neighbouring district, Prahova, there is a cluster of settlements at Budureasca, one at Târgșor, and another at Șirna, all multi-layered sites that may have an important contribution to refining the chronology of the period. Farther to the west, in the Dâmbovița district, there is another settlement with three habitation phases at Băleni-Români. Even though we know very little about all these sites, what we know is worth a comment. In the settlement from Căndești wheel-made pottery was usually produced, which also showed up, albeit in smaller quantities, in the neighbouring cemetery from Sărata-Monteoru. Budureasca is a remote valley behind the hills, very isolated and closed onto itself, an impression confirmed by the few pots known from this cluster of archaeological sites.⁴³ Judging

reeds, in order to escape being captured (*Strategikon* XI.4.7 and 11, ed. by George T. Dennis and Ernst Gamillscheg (Vienna, 1981)).

⁴¹ These are vessels with a high ratio of height to belly bulge diameter (1.4 to 1.6), with no parallels in any other contemporary assemblage in Central or Eastern Europe.

⁴² The Carpi are mentioned in written sources as having inhabited this area during the second and third century. See Gheorghe Bichir, *Cultura carpică* (Bucharest, 1973), and *Geto-dacii din Muntenia în epoca romană* (Bucharest, 1984), esp. p. 123. The Carpi are last mentioned in written sources in 381. Sixth-century analogies for Străulești are to be found in Moldavia, especially in the ceramic assemblage from Bacău. See Ioan Mitrea, 'Regiunea centrală a Moldovei dintre Carpați și Siret în sec. VI–IX', *Carpica*, 12 (1980), figs 23/5 and 24/5.

⁴³ Just three whole pots published in Victor Teodorescu, Vasile I. Dupoi, Marinela Peneș, and others, 'Stațiunea arheologică Budureasca, jud. Prahova (complexele daco-române și străromânești)', *Materiale și cercetări arheologice*, 17 (1993), 365–87, fig. 11/14 and 15, fig.

from the existing evidence, the Budureasca assemblages contain most of the ceramic material available in the lowlands. They also produced a rare example of foreign pottery, a vessel most typical for the Kolochin culture of Belarus as well as of northern and north-eastern Ukraine.⁴⁴ Târgșor too appears as unique, especially because of the crushed-shard tempered pottery (otherwise known from many other sites in northern Muntenia) and shapes without much decoration or any lips,⁴⁵ all of which outline a specific cultural horizon on the site (Figs 4–5). There are several clay pans at Șirna, said to have been found in association with ceramic assemblages of the late Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov culture, and thus dating to the middle of the fifth century, at the latest. Băleni produced some interesting cases of superposed houses, with archaic shapes (often attributed to the Slavs) in the earliest assemblages (early sixth century), but not in later ones (mid- or late sixth century).⁴⁶

Finally, one last aspect worth mentioning is the appearance, mainly after 1990, of a number of sites supposedly devoid of any wheel-made pottery remains: Vadu Codri (Olt district) in Oltenia, Șuvița Hotarului (Călărași district) and Vadu Anei (Ilfov district) in Muntenia. These are the sites expected to produce the greatest quantity of Slavic material. If Șuvița Hotarului and Vadu Anei are somewhat difficult to evaluate, because there are just a few whole vessels preserved (two for each site, to be exact), Vadu Codri has a lot in common with Gropșani. Moreover, the former site produced evidence on an earlier phase in which wheel-made pottery is well represented. The more recent habitation phase may well be of the late sixth or early seventh century, in other words from the last phase of the Ipotești-Cândești culture.⁴⁷

So far, we have seen a number of sites, such as Gropșani, Străulești, Târgșor, and Vadu Codri, each one with its own features, rarely sharing those of their immediate

12/b, another in Teodorescu, 'O nouă cultură arheologică', pp. 104–28 and fig. 6/7. Most material from Budureasca was available to me only in the showcases of the Archaeology and History Museum in Ploiești.

⁴⁴ The pot was not found in association with any other ceramic categories, for it stood alone on a hearth built on top of the filling of a sunken-floored house in Budureasca 5. I should like to thank Dr Dan Lichiardopol for providing to me the stratigraphical details for this context find.

⁴⁵ Or with barely visible lips, as in Diaconu, 'Despre denumirea și cronologia unor culturi', fig. 3/3–5. The lack of a standard publication of the Târgșor site precludes any firm conclusions.

⁴⁶ Personal communication from Luciana Muscă, who kindly showed me the ceramic material from Băleni-Români and several drawings and provided most useful stratigraphical information.

⁴⁷ Much of what passes for the Ipotești-Cândești culture is to be dated within the sixth century, as indicated by well-datable, metal artefacts, such as fibulae. See Madgearu, *Continuitate și discontinuitate culturală*, p. 118. The older literature insisted on a later dating well into the seventh century, i.e. up to the Bulgar invasion of 680. See Teodorescu, 'Despre cultura Ipotești-Cîndești', and 'O nouă cultură arheologică'; Comșa, 'Socio-Economic Organisation'; Dolinescu-Ferche, 'La culture "Ipotești-Cîndești-Ciurel"'.

neighbours. Can this be the Ipotești-Cândești culture postulated by Romanian archaeologists? The more recent tendency of adding new place names to the definition does not seem to solve the problem.⁴⁸ Without getting too deeply into the question of what an archaeological culture is and represents, it is quite clear that at stake is simply a scholarly construction, not the reality behind it.⁴⁹ True, there are cases in which a drastic break with the past is necessary. For example, if research in southern Moldavia makes any significant progress in the nearest future and the evidence is produced of much closer contacts between north-eastern Muntenia and territories to the east, then we will have to reconsider the very terms on which Romanian archaeologists approach the issue. Until then, however, the only certainties seem to be that a number of significant discrepancies and tensions exist within the Ipotești-Cândești culture and that Romanization, as a form of adaptation of certain forms of material culture, was a general but by no means uniform process. Its most clear illustration is in the western area of the Ipotești-Cândești culture, which is also the only one that was under direct Roman rule during the existence of the province of Dacia. In this area, the bridge head (re-)established by Justinian's Empire on the left bank of the Danube at Sucidava (now Celei, Olt district) had a much stronger influence than that of forts located south of the Danube on contemporary settlements in central Muntenia.

That Oltenia may have operated as an interface between territories under the direct control of the Empire and those beyond the Roman frontier is an idea substantiated by recent numismatic studies.⁵⁰ Beginning with the second half of Anastasius's reign (498–512), Roman coins appear in Oltenia with frequencies similar to those in the neighbouring diocese of Dacia, south of the Danube River. The only difference is that there are many more issues of the Constantinopolitan mints in Oltenia, no doubt an indication of payments to the military. By contrast, late fifth- and early sixth-century

⁴⁸ The idea of calling this culture Ipotești-Ciurel-Budureasca-Cândești, etc. strikes me as further complicating an already complicated problem, while Gheorghe Diaconu's idea of naming it 'Romance culture' simply pays lip service to a nationalistic agenda.

⁴⁹ The concept of archaeological culture has recently been under attack. See V. F. Gening, 'Arkheologicheskaiia kul'tura – social'no-istoricheskii organizm – centra'naia kategoriia poznaniia arkheologii (k razrabotke teorii arkheologicheskoi kul'tury)', in *Issledovanie social'no-istoricheskikh problem v arkheologii: Sbornik nauchnykh trudov*, ed. by S. V. Smirnov and V. F. Gening (Kiev, 1987), pp. 6–35; Viktor A. Shnirelman, *Arkheologicheskaiia kul'tura i social'naia realnost': problema interpretacii keramicheskikh arealov* (Ekaterinburg, 1993).

⁵⁰ Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 'Relațiile daco-romanilor și ale populației românești cu lumea sud-est europeană în perioada secolelor IV–XIV: Privire specială asupra teritoriilor de la sud și est de Carpați' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Institute of History 'Nicolae Iorga', Bucharest, 2000). See also Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 'From the Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages – the Byzantine Coins in the Territories of the Iron Gates of the Danube from the Second Half of the Sixth Century to the First Half of the Eighth Century', *Etudes byzantines et post-byzantines*, 4 (2001), 29–69; and 'La monnaie byzantine des VI^e–VIII^e siècles au-delà de la frontière du Bas-Danube: Entre politique, économie et diffusion culturelle', *Histoire & Mesure*, 17 (2002), 155–96.

coin circulation in Muntenia has little to do with contemporary developments across the Danube frontier. The different reaction to inflation, as well as the small quantity of coins, suggests that there were no commercial contacts of any significance between the two banks of the Danube, east of the Olt River. Barbarian raids into the Balkan provinces are clearly marked by interruptions of coin circulation north of the Danube. The break between 545 and 553, when no coins whatsoever entered the territories north of the Danube frontier, was recently interpreted as indicating the advance of the Sclavenes and the corresponding lack of Roman control over Muntenia.⁵¹

This conclusion is now substantiated by the analysis of the written sources.⁵² Indeed, Sclavene raids, mostly in association with others, had only limited impact until 546, the year of the first independent attack of the Sclavenes mentioned by Procopius. By 550, the Sclavenes already posed difficult problems to the Roman armies stationed in the Balkans. By that time, the Slavs must already have been settled in relatively great numbers in a region not far from the targets of their raids. The interruption of coin circulation or the occasional burying of hoards of Roman coins may signalize such raids. More important, in my opinion, is the absence of hoarded gold, as well as of many other archaeological correlates of the enormous spoils resulting from the Sclavene raids reported with so much indignation by Justinian's spin doctors.⁵³

Which Way Is the Right Way?

Is there, then, a contradiction between the written and the archaeological evidence? The answer must be affirmative, as long as we keep looking for the material culture of a migratory population, which we expect to be no different from that in the original homeland (Figs 7–8). This is in fact the general assumption of all studies dedicated to the problem of the Slavic migration into the Balkans. But the question still remains: where are the settlements of the first Slavs who crossed the Danube into the Balkan provinces of the Empire? Until now, the answer was that several sites in north-eastern Bulgaria would fit the profile, as long as they could be dated to the late sixth century, at the earliest.⁵⁴ But these sites have been recently redated to the middle, if not second

⁵¹ Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 'Relațiile daco-romanilor', pp. 96–98, 214, and 233. See also Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia', subchapter 18.1 and pp. 241–46.

⁵² Eugen S. Teodor, 'Epoca romană târzie și cronologia atacurilor transdanubiene: Analiza componentelor etnice și geografice (partea întâi, de la 469 la 565)', *Muzeul Național*, 14 (2002), 3–35; see especially pp. 18–26

⁵³ The number of stray finds of gold increases for Emperor Maurice's reign (582–602). See Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 'Relațiile daco-romanilor', p. 233.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Zhivka Văzharova's studies: *Slavianski i slavianobălgarski selishta v bălgarskite zemi ot kraia na VI–XI vek* (Sofia, 1965); 'Slawen und Protobulgaren auf Grund archäologischer Quellen', *Zeitschrift für Archäologie*, 5 (1971), 266–88; and *Srednovekovnota selishte s. Garvăn, Silistrenski okrag (VI–XI v.)* (Sofia, 1986). See also Genoveva Cankova-

half, of the seventh century.⁵⁵ Needless to say, the basis for this reconsideration is the morphological analysis of the ceramic material. Koleva noticed that assemblages in Ukraine and Poland have very little in common with those in Bulgaria, which post-date the former by more than half a century. The question may now be asked again for the territories north of the Lower Danube: where are the Slavic settlements of the seventh century? Chronologically, there are just three sites offering some firm basis for such a late date: Vadu Codri, perhaps from the first third of the century; Insula Banului, to be dated to the mid-seventh century;⁵⁶ and the second habitation phase of Dulceanca 4 to be dated to the late seventh or early eighth century.⁵⁷ Even if we would accept all these as Slavic settlements (which they were not), their date is much too late to be included in any historical reconstruction. Hoards of silver buried c. 680, the date of the Bulgar invasion, are collections of coins beginning c. 650 and have now been attributed to Slavic federates of the Byzantine Empire,⁵⁸ who were recent newcomers into this area. In fact, all this may be too far-fetched, for no such population is known from the written sources. Nor do we have any archaeological evidence for the years 650 to 680, except the Coșoveni 'hoard', in reality an Avar female burial.⁵⁹

Petkova, 'L'établissement des Slaves et Protobulgares en Bulgarie du nord-est actuelle et le sort de certaines villes riveraines du Danube', *Etudes Historiques*, 5 (1970), 219–39.

⁵⁵ Rumiana Koleva, 'Za datiraneto na slavianskata grupa "Popina-Garvan" v severoiztochna Bălgariia i severna Dobrudzha', *Godishnik na Sofiiskia Universitet 'Kliment Ohridski': Istoricheski Fakultet*, 84–85 (1992), 163–82. This is also the conclusion of Alexandru Madgearu (*Continuitate și discontinuitate culturală*, p. 173), according to whom no Slavic site in Bulgaria could have existed before the invasions of 614 to 626.

⁵⁶ Petre Diaconu and Petre Roman, *Cîteva urme de viețuire din sec. VII în Insula Banului* (Craiova, 1967). The date is purely circumstantial, as the published sample of pottery is much too small. No evidence exists to substantiate the older idea that the site at Radovanu must be dated to the seventh century. All known assemblages from that site include wheel-made pottery, the existence of which in the region north of the Danube after c. 600 has yet to be demonstrated. See Maria Comșa, 'Unele date privind așezarea din sec. VI–VII de la Radovanu, jud. Ilfov', *Muzeul Național*, 2 (1975), 335–41.

⁵⁷ Dolinescu-Ferche, 'Habitats du VI^e et VII^e siècles', pp. 153–72.

⁵⁸ Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 'Relațiile daco-romanilor', pp. 216 and 226. For these hoards, see also Bucur Mitrea, 'Un trésor du VII^e siècle découvert à Priseaca en Valachie', in *Actes du XIV^e Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest, 6–12 septembre 1971*, ed. by Mihai Berza and Eugen Stănescu, vol. 1 (Bucharest, 1974), pp. 212–13; Chavdar Bonev, 'Nachalo dunaikoi Bolgarii v svete nekotorykh arkeologicheskikh dannyykh i monetnykh nakhodok', *Etudes Balkaniques*, 21 (1985), 62–76; Florin Curta, 'Invasion or Inflation? Sixth- to Seventh-Century Byzantine Coin Hoards in Eastern and Southeastern Europe', *Annali dell'Istituto Italiano di Numismatica*, 43 (1996), 65–224, esp. pp. 109–16.

⁵⁹ Ion Nestor and C. S. Nicolaescu-Plopșor, 'Der völkerwanderungszeitliche Schatz Negrescu', *Germania*, 22 (1938), 33–41; Madgearu, *Continuitate și discontinuitate culturală*, p. 164. It is important to note that most hoards were found in Oltenia.

Besides two of the three sites mentioned above, nothing is known about the first half of the seventh century. Earlier, around 600, four hoards of copper were buried in eastern Muntenia, away from the main settlement area.⁶⁰ The Gropeni hoard with a closing coin of 578 was found more than sixty miles away from the nearest contemporary settlement excavated in the region (see Fig. 1 above). The distance between the nearest settlement and the Unirea hoard with a closing coin of 595 is almost 50 miles. Only the Ulmeni find⁶¹ is closer to a cluster of three settlements on the right bank of the Argeş River, but the coincidence in time is questionable. If looking for securely dated settlements of exactly the same age, the nearest is at about 45 miles to the north-west, Bucharest-Ciurel. Finally, the Troianul hoard, buried c. 600, is not far from the cluster of settlements in the Vedea valley, but away from their catchment areas. While the beginning phase of the Ipoteşti-Cândeşti culture is well represented in western Muntenia, almost nothing is known about its ending phase, which makes any association between hoard owners and contemporary settlements highly problematic. Moreover, there seems to be a clear distinction between the distributions in the region north of the Danube of hoards and stray finds, respectively. How then can the archaeological evidence be interpreted?

There is little chance that dramatic developments in the archaeology of the sixth century in this region will fundamentally alter the picture, the outline of which is already clear. The absence of 'Slavic' settlements in the area is a fact, and attempts to explain away the evidence by pointing to a rapid adaptation of the Slavs to wheel-made pottery production are not very convincing.⁶² Indeed, if the Slavs were so quick in adopting the wheel, one wonders why they abandoned it so rapidly.

The analogy often drawn between the Slavic colonization in the west (under Germanic authority) and the migration in the south (under nomadic authority) raises several questions regarding the settlement patterns and the economic profiles of these two areas. Several sites in the Upper Tisza region seem to be more the result of

⁶⁰ For Gropeni and Unirea, see Viorel M. Butnariu, 'Răspîndirea monedelor bizantine din secolele VI–VII în teritoriile carpato-dunărene', *Buletinul Societăţii Numismatice Române*, 77–79 (1983–85), 228. See also Costel Chiriac, 'Cîteva consideraţii asupra tezaurului de monede bizantine de la Gropeni (jud. Brăila)', *Istros*, 1 (1980), 257–62. Ulmeni is probably not a hoard, but stray finds associated in a recent collection. All four are savings from the Balkan provinces that reached the region north of the Danube as plunder and were buried during Roman punitive expeditions. See Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 'Relaţiile daco-romanilor', pp. 221–23.

⁶¹ In fact, a number of stray finds initially thought to have been from the same hoard. See Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 'Relaţiile daco-romanilor', p. 209.

⁶² Parczewski, *Die Anfänge*, p. 124. A similar problem exists for Bukovina, where Soviet archaeologists postulated the earliest Slavic settlements dated by means of Sântana de Mureş-Chernyakhov materials or artefacts attributed to the so-called 'culture of the Carpathian mounds'. See Stanciu, 'Cercetarea arheologică'.

Germanic colonization than of Avar migration.⁶³ It is not yet clear what exactly we should understand by 'Slavs within the Avar qaganate'.⁶⁴

Equally puzzling is the evidence of cemeteries. On the one hand, Walachia produced the greatest sixth- to seventh-century cremation cemetery known until now in Eastern Europe (Sărata Monteoru). Within Walachia, however, this is a unique monument, for the only other known cremations are the two burials from Balta Verde. Moreover, contemporary inhumation burials are known in the vicinity of Sărata Monteoru, at Cricov-Ceptura and Pruneni. As the crow flies, there are almost 190 miles from Ceptura to Balta Verde, and a lot of settlements in between. Given the same population density, there are just ten cemeteries, mostly small, for an entire area of 23,400 square miles anywhere in Ukraine, Poland, or Slovakia. The contrast is striking. So far, no cemetery has a matching settlement, and many settlements in Muntenia have no cemeteries.⁶⁵ Although this seems to be a bit of a problem for other Slavic territories as well,⁶⁶ no generalization is possible at this moment. Moreover, the problem in Muntenia is the absence, during the subsequent centuries, of both cremation cemeteries and hillforts, two most typical 'Slavic markers'.⁶⁷

⁶³ The recent finds from Lazuri may point in this direction. See Ioan Stanciu, 'Așezarea slavă timpurie de la Lazuri—"Lubi tag", jud. Satu Mare (cercetările arheologice din anii 1977, 1993–1995): Contribuții la cunoașterea secolelor 6–7 în zona Tisei superioare', *Studii și comunicări*, 15–16 (1998–99), 115–268.

⁶⁴ Yet see Uwe Fiedler, 'Die Slawen im Bulgarenreich und im Awarenkhanat: Versuch eines Vergleichs', in *Ethnische und kulturelle Verhältnisse an der mittleren Donau vom 6. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert: Symposium Nitra 6. bis 10. November 1994*, ed. by D. Bialeková and J. Zábajník (Bratislava, 1996), pp. 195–214. Tivadar Vida, in his outstanding monograph, *Die awarenzeitliche Keramik I. (6.–7. Jh.)* (Berlin, 1999), p. 152 with fig. 65, points to a concentration of 'Prague-type' wares in the Balaton Lake region of south-western Hungary.

⁶⁵ I am convinced that the Căndești site is to be dated earlier than the beginnings of the Sărata Monteoru cemetery and this may be true for a number of other unpublished finds (mainly by Victor Teodorescu) in the region of the middle course of the Buzău River.

⁶⁶ Barford, *Early Slavs*, chapter 9, with interesting ethnoarchaeological details.

⁶⁷ To my knowledge, Voinești (Dâmbovița district) is the only fortification in the area, but of very small size. For later fortifications, see Olteanu, *Societatea carpato-danubiano-pontică*, pp. 40–41. For the South Slavs, see Tadeusz Wasilewski, 'Les župy et les županie des Slaves méridionaux et leur place dans l'organisation des Etats médiévaux', in *I. Międzynarodowy kongres archeologii słowiańskiej*, ed. by Hensel, III, 217–23. For Germany, see now Sebastian Brather, 'Karolingerzeitlicher Befestigungsbau im wilzisch-abodritischen Raum: Die sogenannten Felberger Hohenburgen', in *Frühmittelalterlicher Burgenbau in Mittel- und Osteuropa: Tagung, Nitra, vom 7. bis 10. Oktober 1996*, ed. by Joachim Henning and Alexander T. Ruttkay (Bonn, 1998), pp. 115–47. For Poland, see Zofia Kurnatowska, 'Forschungen zu frühmittelalterlichen Burgen in Großpolen', in *ibid.*, pp. 31–36. For Ukraine, see P. A. Rappoport, 'O tipologii gorodishch Galickoi Rusi', *Acta Archaeologica Carpathica*, 8 (1966), 213–17. Hillforts are mainly in the north, at the interface with the Baltic and Germanic areas.

Integration Models

The peaceful cohabitation of the Romance population and the Slavs was a concept so dear to those committed to Internationalist ideals that even deformed artefacts that would not fit the supposed level of civilization of the 'Romance culture' were quickly interpreted as signs of spontaneous comradeship. Nevertheless, nobody seems to have been interested in exploring the issue of just what social mechanisms may have been responsible for this phenomenon. What mattered to 'Romanists' was that the Slavs were tamed and confined to their little, ugly huts, too weak to influence the process of Romanian ethnogenesis and too eager to be assimilated to represent a serious problem. By contrast, a Bulgarian archaeologist spoke in the early 1970s of a single 'nation' in existence on both sides of the Danube and resulting from the blending of Slavs and Romance population. To him, a historical accident alone was responsible for the fact that Bulgarians now speak a Slavic language, while Romanians use a Romance language.⁶⁸

Today, it is both a fashion and politically right to speak of 'integration', and one should certainly raise the question, at least since it is generally accepted that Romanian is a Romance language with some Dacian words and a lot of Slavic influence. But should archaeologists be expected to illustrate linguistic phenomena with nice charts of ceramic frequencies? Judging from the ceramic evidence alone, there was no significant mixture of sharply differentiated cultures and no cumulative process of ethnic formation. There is also the fairly old debate about houses and house 'types', whether or not any one of them could be attributed to the migratory Slavs alone.⁶⁹ In my opinion, the only thing that came from the Lower Dnieper steppes were the strong winter winds, but by now the debate is deadlocked. Much like pottery, the house and vernacular architecture are fundamental aspects of the archaeological evidence. To me, at least, pottery was easier to approach because of comparatively greater progress in its understanding in the last five years or so. Having said that, I am the first to acknowledge that no serious discussion of 'Slavic migration' can rest on one pot from Străulești, one from Budureasca, and three from Sărata Monteoru, nor indeed

⁶⁸ Dimităr Krandzhalov, reply to Nestor, 'Problèmes concernant les rapports', pp. 176–77. See also Dimităr Krandzhalov, 'Comment distinguer dans les matériaux archéologiques des pays balkaniques la population locale romanisée des Slaves et des autres éléments ethniques', in *Actes du VII^e Congrès international des sciences préhistoriques et protohistoriques*, ed. by Filip, II, 1179–82. To be sure, Krandzhalov was certainly right when obstinately pointing to Roman traditions in response to Zhivka Văzharova's classification of ceramic assemblages into 'Bulgar' and 'Slavic'.

⁶⁹ Maria Comșa, 'Tipuri de locuințe din secolele VIII–X din sudul Munteniei', *Ilfov-file de istorie* (1978), 111–15 and 'Cu privire la originea tipului de bordei cu cuptor scobit din epoca feudală timpurie în zona extracarpatică a României', *Hierasus*, 5 (1983), 147–56. See now Călin Cosma, 'Considerații privind așezările rurale și tipurile de locuințe din Transilvania în secolele VIII–X', *Ephemeris Napocensis*, 6 (1996), 261–79.

can we rely exclusively on even a greater number of published specimens. I therefore searched for possible areas of 'integration' to test a number of working hypotheses.

The only region with a sufficient number of settlements and archaeological assemblages to be used in this analysis is northern Moldavia and (present-day Ukrainian) Bukovina. The most famous site in this region is Rashkov,⁷⁰ the best known of a relatively large number of settlements in the Upper Dniester region and in western Volhynia. The analysis of the ceramic assemblages of this large settlement showed multiple links with several other sites, both east and west. Rashkov has the largest number of links with remote sites and presents, perhaps, the greatest openness to outside influences among all sixth- to seventh-century sites taken into consideration in this analysis. There are many features reminiscent of the pottery from assemblages in Korchak, on sites in southern Poland and in eastern Germany, or of the so-called Pen'kovka culture. Despite such variety, one particular feature of the Rashkov pottery is that almost every vessel has a short, peculiarly enlarged foot. There are almost no analogies in Ukraine for this particular feature. The only other examples of vessel feet are in Korchak, but these are comparatively much higher feet (Fig. 9). Rashkov's unique position within the 'Slavic world' may be explained only in reference to previous archaeological cultures in the area, none of which, however, could be associated with the Slavs.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Vladimir D. Baran, *Prazhskaia kul'tura Podnestrov'ia po materialam poselenii u s. Rashkov* (Kiev, 1988). See also Vladimir D. Baran, 'Slavianskaia derevnia rannego sredneveko'ia (po materialam poseleniia V–VII vv. u s. Rashkov)', in *Drevnosti slavian i Rusi*, ed. by B. A. Timoshchuk (Moscow, 1988), pp. 12–18. For sixth- and seventh-century settlements in the Upper Dniester region and in western Volhynia, see also V. D. Baran, 'Nekotorye itogi izucheniiia ranneslavianskikh drevnostei verkhnego Podnestrov'ia i zapadnoi Volynii', *Archeologické rozhledy*, 20 (1968), 583–93, and 'Ranneslavianskie poseleniia Podnestrov'ia i Zapadnoi Volyni', *Slavia Antiqua*, 30 (1984–1987), 75–86.

⁷¹ Most attempts to establish the antiquity of the Slavic culture in Bukovina made extensive use of comparisons with the Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov culture. See Ion S. Vinokur, 'Cherniakhovskie tradicii i pamiatnikakh serediny i tret'ei chetverti I tysiacheletiiia n.e. lesostepnogo Dnestro-Dneprovskogo mezhdurech'ia', in *Rapports du III^e Congrès international d'archéologie slave: Bratislava 7–14 septembre 1975*, ed. by Bohuslav Chropovský, vol. II (Bratislava, 1980), pp. 867–77; Vladimir D. Baran, 'K voprosu ob istochkakh slavianskoi kul'tury rannego srednevekov'ia', *Acta Archaeologica Carpathica*, 21 (1981), 67–88, and 'Istoki prazhskei kul'tury (po materialam Dnestra i Pruta)', in *Studia nad etnogeneza słowian i kultury Europy wczesnośredniowiecznej: Praca zbiorowa*, ed. by Gerard Labuda and Stanisław Tabaczynski, vol. I (Wrocław, etc. 1987), pp. 35–51; L. V. Vakulenko and O. M. Prikhodniuk, 'Problema preemstvennosti cherniakhovskikh i rannesrednevekovykh drevnostei v svete novykh issledovaniia na srednem Dnestre', *Slovenská Archeológia*, 33 (1985), 71–136. For assemblages of the Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov and other related cultures in the region, see Vladimir D. Baran, 'Siedlungen der Černjachov-Kultur am Bug und oberen Dnestr', *Zeitschrift für Archäologie*, 7 (1973), 24–66; B. A. Timoshchuk, 'Cherniakhovskaia kul'tura i drevnosti kul'tury karpatskikh kurganov (po materialam Chernovickoi obl.)', *Kratkie soobshcheniia Instituta Arkheologii AN SSSR*, 178 (1984), 86–91. The Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov connection is also viewed as

On the other side of the Ukrainian-Romanian border, the site at Botoșana presents an equally complex picture. In Romania, the site is known for having given its name to the Costișa-Botoșana culture, which allegedly represents the local population before the arrival of the Slavs.⁷² The hallmark of this culture is the wheel-made pottery of clear Roman traditions, in terms of both technology and shape. By contrast, the handmade pottery has a number of analogies on a variety of sites in Eastern Europe. But almost half of all shapes identified at Botoșana have no analogies anywhere else, which suggests the existence of some local traditions of yet unspecified character. Initial attempts to explain Botoșana as a Slavic site in early contact with local, Romance communities producing wheel-made pottery were invalidated by the significant presence of artefacts with explicit Christian symbolism: two handmade, 'Slavic-looking' pots with incised crosses,⁷³ a spindle-whorl with an incised image of a fish; a mould for casting pectoral crosses.⁷⁴ Botoșana thus produced evidence of a mixed community that should in principle pre-date the Rashkov site, with different cultural traditions blended on distinctly different categories of artefacts.

There are also unique cases in Bukovina. The site at Kodyn has long been viewed as continuing the culture of the first centuries AD known as of 'the Carpathian barrows'.⁷⁵

fundamental for the rise of several other contemporary cultures in Eastern Europe, such as Kolochin and Pen'kovka. See E. A. Symonovich, 'Severnaia periferiia cherniakhovskii kul'tury i slaviane', in *Tezisy dokladov sovetsskoi delegatsii na IV Mezhdunarodnom kongresse slavianskoi arkheologii. Sofiia, sentiabr 1980 g.* (Moscow, 1980), pp. 23–25, and 'Cherniakhovskaia kul'tura i pamiatniki Kievskogo i Kolochinskogo tipa', *Sovetskaia Arkheologiia*, 1 (1983), 91–102; Oleg M. Prikhodniuk, 'Anty i Pen'kovskaia kul'tura', in *Drevnie slaviane i Kievskaiia Rus'*, ed. by P. P. Tolochko (Kiev, 1989), pp. 58–69; E. V. Makhno and M. I. Sikorskii, 'Anty i cherniakhovskaia kul'tura', in *VI Mezhdunarodnyi kongress slavianskoi arkheologii, g. Prilep, Iugoslaviia, 1990 g. Tezisy dokladov, podgotovlennyykh sovetsskimi issledovateliami*, ed. by V. V. Sedov (Moscow, 1990), pp. 51–54. In any case, the analysis of ceramic assemblages of both the Korchak group and the so-called Pen'kovka culture clearly shows that the two did originate from very different traditions of pottery making.

⁷² Dan Gh. Teodor, 'Conceptul de cultură Costișa-Botoșana: Considerații privind continuitatea populației autohtone la est de Carpați în sec. V–VII', *Studia antiqua et archaeologica*, 1 (1983), 215–27, and *Civilizația romană la est de Carpați în secolele V–VII (așezarea de la Botoșana-Suceava)* (Bucharest, 1984).

⁷³ Dan Gh. Teodor, *Creștinismul la est de Carpați de la origini și pînă în secolul al XVI-lea* (Iași, 1991), p. 130 and fig. 12/2, 4. This decoration appears so far only in assemblages on sites near the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube.

⁷⁴ Teodor, *Creștinismul*, pp. 125 with fig. 7/6 and 126 with fig. 8/1.

⁷⁵ Irina P. Rusanova and B. O. Timoshchuk, *Kodyn, slavianskie poseleniia V–VIII vv. na r. Prut* (Moscow, 1984), pp. 42–43. For the Carpathian barrows, see M. Iu. Smishko, *Karpat'ski kurgani pershoi polovini I tysiacholittia nashoi eri* (Kiev, 1960), and L. V. Vakulenko, 'Kul'tura karpats'kikh kurganyv: Istoriia doslydzhen' ta novy vydkrittia', in *Starozhitnosty Rusy-Ukrayni: Zbyrnik naukovikh prac'*, ed. by P. P. Tolochko, Ia. E. Borov'skii, B. A. Zvyzdec'kii, and O. M. Prikhodniuk (Kiev, 1994), pp. 18–22.

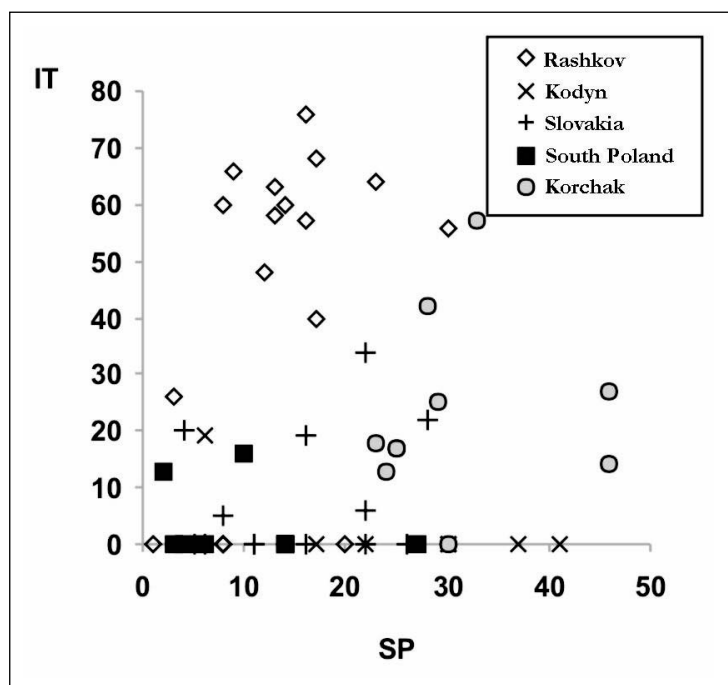


Figure 9. Foot morphology of pots from assemblages in Bukovina and other sites used for comparison.

For abbreviations and bibliography, see Fig. 2 and note 70, respectively.

Unlike all other sites in Bukovina, the ceramic assemblages at Kodyn have no links with the 'Slavic world'. The existing evidence points to a community almost completely isolated from the changing cultural landscape in the region. A very slow tendency towards uniformity of vessel shapes can be identified only for the late seventh and early eighth centuries. The same is true in general lines for another site on the other side of the Ukrainian-Romanian border, Suceava-Șipot.⁷⁶ Due to the limited

⁷⁶ Mircea D. Matei, 'Contribuții la cunoașterea ceramicii slave de la Suceava', *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche*, 10 (1959), 409–39, and 'Die slawische Siedlungen von Suceava (Nordmoldau, Rumänien)', *Slovenská Archeológia*, 10 (1962), 149–74; Mircea D. Matei and Mara Nicorescu, 'Șantierul arheologic Suceava', *Materiale și cercetări arheologice*, 8 (1962), 741–47; M. Matei, Al. Andronic, N. Constantinescu, and others, 'Șantierul arheologic Suceava', *Materiale și cercetări arheologice*, 9 (1970), 373–99; Dan Gh. Teodor, *Descoperiri arheologice și numismatice la est de Carpați în secolele V–XI* (Iași, 1997), pp. 19–20. The site has long been viewed as typical for the 'early contact' period of the Slavic culture and the fallacy is still repeated in most recent studies. See Maria Comșa, 'Novye svedeniia o rasselenii slavian na territorii RNR', *Romanoslavica*, 9 (1963), 505–29; Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 'Considérations', pp. 181–99; Dan Gh. Teodor, 'Unele probleme privind evoluția culturii materiale din

number of excavated assemblages, it is not possible to establish the network of possible links between this and other contemporary sites. Much like Kodyn, however, Suceava-Șipot displays a solid inclination towards shapes of Dacian and Sarmatian tradition. By contrast, the small excavation at Dolheștii Mari produced sufficient evidence pertaining to a group of newcomers, most likely without any contacts with the local population.⁷⁷

Judging from the existing evidence, therefore, Bukovina was not the 'homeland of the Slavs', but a region of great cultural complexity, in which traditions existed side by side, with different degrees of fusion. The archaeological evidence suggests that a process of ethnic synthesis was on its way, but it is not clear when that process ended, if at all.

Further to the south, at Izvoare-Bahna, we probably have a series of populations living within the same confined area and establishing three successive settlements. The first settlement produced post-Roman wheel-made pottery of good quality to be dated probably to the first half of the sixth century.⁷⁸ The second habitation phase, perhaps from the early seventh century, has similar buildings, but very different ceramic assemblages, with many handmade shapes. Even if we accept the (rather tenuous) idea that continuity in house building was possible because men built houses, while their (Slavic) wives modelled the pottery, and were thus responsible for the introduction of the new cultural elements, the disappearance of the wheel-made pottery is in itself of greater historical importance. In more than one way, this archaeological phenomenon points to a dramatic cultural change in society.

A very different model of integration was available in Dobrudja (the Roman province of Scythia Minor). It has long been known that several forts and open settlements in the northern Balkans produced handmade pottery. Because of the great advantages of multilayered stratigraphy and the relative abundance of datable artefacts, such archaeological contexts are best suited for the study of the issue at stake. At Piatra Frecăței, the handmade pottery was associated with a destruction

Moldova în sec. VI–X', *Carpica*, 2 (1969), 253–307; Ioan Mitrea, 'Contribuții la cunoașterea populației locale dintre Carpați și Siret în secolele V–VI e.n.', *Memoria Antiquitatis*, 2 (1970), 345–59; Dimităr Dimitrov, 'La culture materielle sur la rive septentrionale gauche du Bas-Danube aux VI^e–X^e siècles', *Etudes Balkaniques*, 21 (1985), 114–32; Chavdar Bonev, 'Etnicheskiat oblik na Karpato-dnestărskite zemi prez VI–VII v. (po arkheologicheski danni)', in *Bălgarite v Severnoto Prichernomorie: Izsledvaniia i materialy*, ed. by Petar Todorov, vol. IV (Veliko Tărnovo, 1995), pp. 53–70; Oleg M. Prikhodniuk, 'O edinstve i razlichiiakh v Pen'kovskoi kul'ture', *Materialy po arkheologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii*, 6 (1997), 499–522.

⁷⁷ Mugur Andronic, 'Așezarea din secolele VI–VII d.H. de la Dolheștii Mari-Suceava', *Memoria Antiquitatis*, 20 (1995), 133–40.

⁷⁸ Ioan Mitrea, *Așezarea din secolele VI–IX de la Izvoare-Bahna: Realități arheologice și concluzii istorice* (Piatra Neamț, 1998), p. 61 and figs 23, 29, 31, 33, 34, and 36. Mitrea himself dated this phase to the eighth century, but all analogies to the ceramic material point to the sixth.

phase within the fort that was coin-dated to 559. As a consequence, the pottery was attributed to the invading Slavs, for 'Romans could have never produced such a thing'.⁷⁹ Whether or not the Slavs participated in Zabergan's Cutrigur invasion of 558/9 is a matter of dispute; that they did not use pottery as ammunition is nonetheless obvious. The handmade pottery from Piatra Frecăței includes angular profiles most typical for the Pen'kovka culture, which has been repeatedly attributed to the Antes. By 559, the Antes were the allies of the Romans against other steppe horsemen threatening the Danube frontier of the Empire.⁸⁰ In any case, the pottery in question must have belonged to those besieged within the fort, not to those who besieged it.⁸¹ We recently learned more about the so-called 'barbarian' pottery in Roman forts, a ceramic category many excavators still regard with great disdain and rarely record or preserve. More importantly, handmade pottery appeared in well-stratified contexts, in Murighiol/Halmyris⁸² and Capidava, on the right bank of the Danube.⁸³ While angular profiles are predominant in Murighiol,⁸⁴ such profiles are

⁷⁹ D. Vilceanu and Alexandru Barnea, 'Ceramica lucrată cu mâna din așezarea romano-bizantină de la Piatra Frecăței (sec. VI e.n.)', *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie*, 26 (1975), 209–18.

⁸⁰ Since 545, see Procopius, *Wars* 7.14.21 and 32–35, ed. by J. Hauray, trans. by H. B. Dewing, 5 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1914–28). For Turrus, see now Alexandru Madgearu, 'The Placement of the Fortress Turrus', *Balkan Studies*, 33 (1992), 203–08; Teodor, 'Slavii la nordul Dunării', pp. 225–26. For the alliance, see Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, pp. 80–81. For the Pen'kovka culture as Antian, see Dan Gh. Teodor, 'Unele considerații privind originea și cultura anților', *Arheologia Moldovei*, 16 (1993), 205–13; Igor Corman, 'Migrațiile din teritoriul dintre Carpați și Nistru în sec. V–VII. Problema "anților"', *Revista Arheologică*, 1 (1993), 93–100; Corman, 'L'origine ethnique', pp. 169–89; Corman, 'Migrațiile din teritoriul dintre Carpați și Nistru în secolele V–VII: Problema anților', in *Spațiul nord-est carpatic în mileniul întunecat*, ed. by Victor Spinei (Iași, 1997), pp. 67–77; Oleg M. Prikhodniuk, *Pen'kovskaia kul'tura: kul'turno-khronologicheskii aspekt issledovaniia* (Voronezh, 1998).

⁸¹ See also Madgearu, *Continuitate și discontinuitate culturală*, p. 171.

⁸² About ten whole vessels, all unpublished. See, however, Andrei Opaît, 'Ceramica din așezarea și cetatea de la Independența (Murighiol) secolele V î.e.n.–VII e.n.', *Peuce*, 10 (1991), 133–82. Murighiol is located in the north-eastern corner of Scythia Minor and most likely was designed to control access to and from the Danube Delta.

⁸³ About thirteen whole vessels, all published in a recent dissertation, Ioan Carol Opreș, 'Ceramica romană târzie din Dobrogea (secolele IV–VI d.Hr.), cu privire specială la Capidava' (doctoral dissertation, Institute of Thracology, Bucharest, 2000), pp. 105–33. Published lately as *Ceramica romană târzie și paleobizantină de la Capidava în contextul descoperirilor de la Dunărea de Jos (sec. IV–VI p. Chr)* (București, 2003) (see especially pp. 102–10 and cat. 250–66). For Capidava, see also Constantin Scorpan, 'O nouă problemă pentru secolele VI–VII e.n.', *Pontica*, 1 (1968), 364–66.

⁸⁴ There are many other shapes reminiscent of the pottery found in contemporary settlements excavated in the Republic of Moldova. I would like to thank Dr Florin Topoleanu from the History and Archaeology Museum in Tulcea, who kindly allowed me to visit the museum

not known in Capidava. The evidence from Piatra Frecăței, Murighiol, and Capidava suggests that small numbers of soldiers in frontier forts had been recruited from among the 'barbarians' on the opposite bank of the river, most likely from among Antes. The handmade pottery found in Capidava, as well as the pottery produced on a tournette (a turntable device operated by hand) are close imitations of wheel-made specimens of late Roman pottery, with several analogies in Muntenia, including Sărata Monteoru.⁸⁵ The archaeological context of such finds provides a clear explanation for the production of this pottery on Roman fortified sites in the Lower Danube region, for in Capidava handmade vessels were found together with other wheel-made vessels in a food storage area destroyed in 559. That soldiers in the Roman army used handmade pottery is an interesting issue of Roman history and, in itself, an indication that the walls of such forts may have crumbled from within.

Shapes of sixth-century handmade vessels found in Capidava are to be found later in ceramic assemblages of the so-called Garvan-Popina group dated to the mid-seventh century. Such assemblages are traditionally ascribed to Slavic settlers in northern Bulgaria, an idea confirmed by further analogies with three morphological groups from the early medieval hillfort at Khotomel (southern Belarus) and from other sites of the Slavic homeland (if such a homeland ever existed).⁸⁶ It would be interesting to know whether these Slavs settled in northern Bulgaria in the early 600s or during the so-called Middle Avar period (middle and second half of the seventh century). Although one possibility does not exclude the other, everything bespeaks a later phenomenon. Many analogies for the pottery of this group point to Muntenia, but also to Bukovina, which suggests that Garvan-Popina communities were not homogeneous.

A process of integration similar to that identified in Rashkov, Botoșana, Izvoare-Bahna, or in assemblages of the Garvan-Popina group has yet to be found within settlements of the Walachian Plain. However, the large cemetery at Sărata Monteoru provides some interesting analogies. The site was initially ascribed to the Slavs,⁸⁷ but its main excavator, Ion Nestor, also pointed to more than one parallel with Avar

storage area, where I was able to study the ceramic assemblages from Murighiol. Many thanks also to Dr Mihai Zahariade who showed me the pottery found in assemblages most recently excavated on this site.

⁸⁵ Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia', p. 81. For a complete list of Roman fort sites with similar pottery, see Madgearu, *Continuitate și discontinuitate culturală*, p. 171.

⁸⁶ Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia', p. 82. Florin Curta's recently published thesis (*Making of the Slavs*), namely that there was no homeland and no migration of the Slavs, who, in fact, were local communities in the Lower Danube region who used Common Slavic as lingua franca, is very convincing and matches the existing evidence. But I still believe that migration, albeit on a much smaller scale, should not be excluded from the overall picture.

⁸⁷ 'Șantierul arheologic Sărata Monteoru', *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche*, 6 (1955), 510–11; Ion Nestor, 'La nécropole slave d'époque ancienne de Sărata Monteoru', *Dacia*, 1 (1957), 289–95; Ion Nestor and Eugenia Zaharia, 'Săpăturile de la Sărata Monteoru (r. Buzău, reg. Ploiești)', *Materiale și cercetări arheologice*, 5 (1959), 511–18.

cemeteries in Hungary. According to the preliminary reports, there are four main ways of burying the cremated remains, either in pit or in urn graves.⁸⁸ Without a comprehensive monograph of the site, it is difficult to assess the significance of this variety of funerary rites. Nestor himself abjured his own statements and, instead, later assigned the cemetery to the newly invented Ipotești-Cândești culture, on the basis of certain artefacts, such as wheel-made pottery, fibulae, and artefacts with overt Christian symbolism. We know that out of more than 1600 cremation burials,⁸⁹ only 300 or so are urn graves similar to those found elsewhere in East Central Europe.⁹⁰ That local people cremating their dead may have also been Christian is not a novel idea, and is so far the best solution for this puzzle:⁹¹ on the one hand, a relative abundance of artefacts with explicit Christian symbolism,⁹² on the other, the absence of any Christian graves in the region. The discovery of smaller cemeteries⁹³ with

⁸⁸ Pit graves, pit graves with deposition of pottery, urn graves with cremated remains both inside and outside the urn, urn graves with cremated remains only inside the urn. See Nestor, 'La nécropole slave', p. 290.

⁸⁹ Teodor, 'Slavii la nordul Dunării', p. 234.

⁹⁰ Rusanova, *Slavianskie drevnosti VI–VII vv.*, pp. 132 fig. 47 (urn graves in Slovakia), 41 fig. 21 (urn graves in the Polesie, in the Korchak area), p. 58 fig. 25 (pit graves in northern and Left Bank Ukraine, within the Kolochin area). See also Marija Gimbutas, *The Slavs* (New York, 1971), p. 91, for urn grave within the Volyncevo culture. For details on funerary rites for both urn and pit graves, see Parczewski, *Die Anfänge*, p. 124; Fusek, *Slovensko*, pp. 312–13. For Poland, see Helena Zoll-Adamikowa, 'Zu der Brandbestattungsbräuchen der Slawen im 6. bis 10. Jahrhundert in Polen', *Ethnographisch-archäologische Zeitschrift*, 13 (1972), 497–542, and 'Die Grabsitten zwischen Elbe und Weichsel im 6. bis 10. Jh. als Quelle zur Religion der Westslawen', *Slavica Gandensia*, 7–8 (1980–81), 113–21. See also Helena Zoll-Adamikowa, 'W kwestii genezy słowiańskich praktyk pogrzebowych', in *Miscellanea archaeologica Thaddaeo Malinowski dedicata*, ed. by Franciszek Roznowski (Ślupsk, 1993), pp. 377–85, and 'Stan badań nad obrzędowością pogrzebowa słowian', *Slavia Antiqua*, 38 (1997), 65–80.

⁹¹ Bârză and Brezeanu, *Originea și continuitatea românilor*, pp. 207–08; Teodor, 'Slavii la nordul Dunării', p. 234.

⁹² Teodor, *Creștinismul*, pp. 82–90 and figs 7–16; Ioan Mitrea, *Comunități sătești la est de Carpați în epoca migrațiilor: Așezarea de la Davideni din secolele V–VIII* (Piatra Neamț, 2001), pp. 198–203 and figs 65, 67–68, 82, and 109.

⁹³ Lozna-Străteni and Cândești-Vrancea (both in Moldavia); see Teodor, 'Slavii la nordul Dunării', pp. 236–37. At Lozna, there are twenty burials known so far, all pit graves. Since a seventh- to eighth-century settlement was built on top of what must have been a much larger cemetery, the burials in question must be of an earlier date, perhaps of the seventh century. This is confirmed by a still unpublished belt mount found in one of the graves. Only three burials are known from Cândești, one of which is an urn grave. On the difficulty of recognizing cremation pit graves, as well as other forms of burial that may have left no traces in the archaeological record, see Helena Zoll-Adamikowa, 'Die oberirdischen Brandbestattungen bei den Slawen im Lichte der schriftlichen und archäologischen Quellen', *Archaeologia Polona*, 21–22 (1983), 223–32.

cremations predominantly in pit graves suggests that this may indeed have been the sixth-century 'norm'. Does this mean that the remaining 1300 burials in Sărata Monteoru must be ascribed to the Romance population?

A quick glimpse at post-Roman cemeteries in the northern Balkans may give us some hints. In all cremation cemeteries known so far in this region, urn graves are more numerous, with pit graves making up as much as forty per cent of all burials.⁹⁴ However, in biritual cemeteries (in which inhumations are traditionally ascribed to the Bulgars), there are more pit than urn graves among cremations.⁹⁵ Overall, therefore, there are about as many urn as pit graves.⁹⁶ It is hard to believe that all cremations in pit graves indicate a Slavic population, but the issue is still a contentious one in Bulgarian archaeology.⁹⁷ Forensic analysis of skeletal remains from later cemeteries with Christian burials indicates a strong presence of Mediterranean types,⁹⁸ which raises interesting questions regarding the seventh and eighth centuries. Despite the lack of any Christian burials after c. 650 and before c. 800, both the archaeological (continuation of Roman pottery traditions or hybridization of funerary rites, e.g. cremation 'cists') and the anthropological evidence indicate the presence of an important population of Roman or pre-Roman origin.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Stamen Stanilov, 'Le rite funéraire païen dans la Dobroudja du Nord et "la culture Dridu"', in *Dobrudža: Etudes ethno-culturelles. Recueil d'articles*, ed. by Dimităr Angelov (Sofia, 1987), pp. 36–47; Uwe Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern des 6. bis 9. Jahrhunderts an der unteren Donau* (Bonn, 1992), pp. 274–81 and 275 fig. 108.

⁹⁵ Stanilov, 'Le rite funéraire païen', p. 42 with table I on p. 41 (cremation cemeteries) and II on p. 44 (biritual cemeteries).

⁹⁶ This may also be true for contemporary cemeteries north of the Danube River, all of which were found not far from the left bank. See Cristian Luca and Dragoș Mândescu, *Rituri și ritualuri funerare în spațiul extracarpatic în secolele VIII–X* (Brăila, 2001), p. 62: 57.6 per cent urn graves and 42.4 per cent pit graves. Given that cremation graves are much more difficult to spot, it is possible that the percentage of pit graves is in fact understated.

⁹⁷ Stanilov, 'Le rite funéraire païen', p. 46 with n. 48.

⁹⁸ Petăr Boev, Neli Kondova, and Slavcho Cholakov, 'Données anthropologiques sur la population médiévale dans la Bulgarie de nord-est', in *Dobrudža: Etudes ethno-culturelles*, ed. by Angelov, pp. 211–17. See also Nelli Kondova and Slavcho Cholakov, 'Europeidity and Mongoloidity on the Territory of Medieval Bulgaria', *Archaeologia Bulgarica*, 1 (1997), 88–96. These studies suggest that almost half of all skeletons could be classified under 'Europeidity', understood as a combination of racial factors with a strong Mediterranean component. The remaining part is unequally divided between Mongoloid (about a quarter) and Nordic types. Only the latter can be associated with the presence of the Slavs. This, in my mind, substantiates Curta's conclusion (*Making of the Slavs*) that the 'Slavs' were more a cultural construct (a matter of perception by outsiders), than a cultural tradition or ethnicity.

⁹⁹ *Contra*: Ion Barnea, 'Dobrogea între anii 681–1186', in *Din istoria Dobrogei*, vol. III, ed. by Ion Barnea and Ștefan Ștefănescu (Bucharest, 1971), p. 62. One of the strongest arguments cited is the absence of historical precedents for the abandonment of Christianity. The alternative would be to accept the decimation of that population. There is, however, no historical

If we admit, for an instant, that all cremations found in the northern Balkans are Slavic and try to apply the same line of reasoning to Sărata Monteoru, the latter still has a disproportionately higher number of pit graves.¹⁰⁰ And if urn graves are burials of Slavic warriors, it is hard to explain why most urn shapes have no analogies anywhere else.¹⁰¹ There is very little evidence to support the idea of Slavic warriors bringing along families in their search for better lands.¹⁰² Bands of Slavic warriors were just the social core of such communities as are represented archaeologically in Sărata Monteoru or in assemblages of the Garvan-Popina group. The ‘abduction of the Sabine women’ is a legendary metaphor for ethnic formation. Beyond conflict and violence, exogamy must have regulated the life of these early medieval societies, and groups exchanging women engaged in much more than that. Exchange of services, including military ones, is a better explanation than military force alone for the domination imposed by relatively small groups (Huns, Avars, Bulgars) on much larger social organisms. To my knowledge, this interpretation is not contradicted by forensic analyses indicating sharp racial differences between males and females in both Avar and Bulgarian cemeteries.¹⁰³ A similar differentiation exists in Sărata Monteoru between urn grave cremation and the non-Slavic character of the associated pottery and artefacts.

Another aspect of the ‘integration’ is revealed by the analysis of map distributions of several classes of brooches. Such artefacts are to be treated not just as dress accessories, but as prestige goods and an important element in defining rank and connections. An interesting example is the distribution of bow fibulae of the Pietroasele class (Werner’s class IF, see Fig. 1),¹⁰⁴ with a few clusters in Eastern Prussia, the

precedent for such a thing in this region, unless one embraces the idea that all Dacians had been exterminated after or during the Trajanic conquest of Dacia, an idea unanimously rejected by Romanian archaeologists. On the other hand, when during the second half of the ninth century Christian burials began to reappear, often on the fringes of biritual cemeteries, this was a phenomenon associated with the conversion of Bulgaria, not with the continuity of late Roman funerary practices. See Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern*, pp. 247–57.

¹⁰⁰ Ion Nestor, ‘La nécropole slave’, p. 290, has suggested that during the history of the Sărata Monteoru cemetery, a gradual transition took place from pit to urn graves. However, the evidence of Lozna, where an entire cemetery may have been made up of only pit graves, makes Nestor’s idea hard to accept. Moreover, differences in funerary rite from contemporary burials within the same cemetery may well reflect rank or age, not necessarily ethnicity. Urn graves in biritual cemeteries in Bulgaria are always found next to pit graves. See Stanilov, ‘Le rite funéraire païen’, pp. 41–42.

¹⁰¹ Teodor, ‘Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia’, pp. 132–34.

¹⁰² As in Gimbutas, *The Slavs*, p. 14.

¹⁰³ Pál Liptak, *Avars and Ancient Hungarians* (Budapest, 1983), pp. 60 (for Allatyán) and 92 (for Kiskörös). For north-eastern Bulgaria, see Stanilov, ‘Le rite funéraire païen’.

¹⁰⁴ Florin Curta and Vasile Dupoi, ‘Über die Bügelfibel aus Pietroasele und ihre Verwandten’, *Dacia*, 38–39 (1994–95), 217–38, esp. fig. 20.

Middle Dnieper region, and the Walachian Plain. If the fashion of such brooches originated in the Middle Dnieper region, the idea that their presence in Eastern Prussia is to be explained by means of trade with amber will have to await confirmation from the publication of the large cemetery at Sărata Monteoru. If the idea is indeed confirmed, then we will have to accept that such fibulae were also made in the Lower Danube region, either by craftsmen coming from the Middle Dnieper area or after models brought from there. Who exactly these craftsmen were remains unknown, as the Middle Dnieper area is a crossroads of several cultures, Pen'kovka, Kolochin, and Korchak. All three cultures are represented in the ceramic assemblages of the Walachian Plain as well, but in much smaller quantities and much dispersed. As a consequence, the relatively uniform distribution of bow brooches is to be understood not culturally (i.e. as an element of an archaeological culture), but symbolically, in terms of how several individuals wished to represent their relations to the powerful of that time.

The idea, championed in the 1950s by Joachim Werner and Soviet archaeologists,¹⁰⁵ that bow fibulae signalize the migration of the Slavs is now under serious challenge. Such fibulae were found in archaeological assemblages that produced mostly wheel-made pottery,¹⁰⁶ an association that substantiates an early dating to the sixth century¹⁰⁷ but does not support the 'Slavic connection'. In addition, a careful consideration of the distribution of 'Slavic' bow fibulae¹⁰⁸ will indicate their association with the world of the steppe. Bow fibulae were found in relatively great numbers as far west as the Walachian Plain and as far south as the Balkans. The latter

¹⁰⁵ Joachim Werner, 'Slawische Bügelfibeln des 7. Jahrhunderts', in *Reinecke Festschrift zum 75. Geburtstag von Paul Reinecke am 25. September 1947*, ed. by G. Behrens (Mainz, 1950), pp. 150–72; Boris A. Rybakov, 'Drevnie rusi. K voprosu ob obrazovanii iadra drevnerusskoi narodnosti v svete trudov I. V. Stalina', *Sovetskaia Arkheologiya*, 17 (1953), 23–104.

¹⁰⁶ At Bratei, burials 167 and 255; see Dan Gh. Teodor, 'Fibule "digitate" din secolele VI–VII în spațiul carpato-dunăreano-pontic', *Arheologia Moldovei*, 15 (1992), 137–38. Bucharest-Soldat Ghivan Street, house 12: Dolinescu-Ferche and Constantiniu, 'Un établissement du VI^e siècle', pp. 324 and 323 fig. 20. Davideni, house 41: Mitrea, *Comunități sătești*, pp. 160 and 329 fig. 68/2. Most recently, a fragment of a bow fibula was found in association with wheel-made pottery during my 2001 excavations in Copăceanca (Teleorman district).

¹⁰⁷ As advanced by both Uwe Fiedler (*Studien zu Gräberfeldern*, pp. 102–04) and Florin Curta (Curta and Dupoi, 'Über die Bügelfibel aus Pietroasele', p. 233). For the redating of all bow fibulae, see Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, p. 270, according to whom Werner's classes IC and ID, perhaps IF as well, may be dated mainly to the sixth century.

¹⁰⁸ Barford, *Early Slavs*, p. 345, maps all finds sorted by Werner's classes. There are clear clusters in Mazuria and the Middle Dnieper region, but most specimens were definitely found in Moldavia and Walachia. There are no 'Slavic' fibulae in northern Ukraine and Belarus, Poland or Slovakia. For more map distributions of 'Slavic' bow fibulae, see Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, pp. 251–69; Liudmil F. Vagalinski, 'Zur Frage der ethnischen Herkunft der späten Strahlenfibeln (Finger- oder Bügelfibeln) aus dem Donau-Karpaten-Becken (M. 6.–7. Jh.)', *Zeitschrift für Archäologie*, 28 (1994), 261–305.

have been quickly interpreted as 'Germanic',¹⁰⁹ but such brooches were not found in any significant quantity in Illyricum (western and central Balkans), where according to the written sources federates of Germanic origin (Goths, Heruls, or Gepids) were mainly located. Several classes of brooches, including fibulae with bent stem,¹¹⁰ are more likely to have served for marking social status and ranking within the Empire and must thus be interpreted in social or political, not ethnic, terms.

Equally interesting in this respect are signs incised on pots (Fig. 10). Very similar signs were found on pots from sites located relatively far from each other (see Fig. 1 above). The idea of itinerant potters as a source of inspiration must be rejected, for all known examples of such pots are handmade.¹¹¹ On the other hand, all pots with incised signs seem to have served some special purpose, as no site produced any significant quantity of such remains. The signs were therefore not just decoration; they played a symbolic role. Indeed, in most cases, the signs in question consist of simple crosses¹¹² or swastikas.¹¹³ That such signs may have carried a Christian symbolism has been disputed on grounds that these are simple X-shaped or entirely meaningless incisions.¹¹⁴ A closer look at the evidence, however, confirms the deliberate character of this decoration (Fig. 10). Take, for example, simple crosses followed by 'tails' in the form of wavy lines. Two almost identical examples were found in Dulceanca 1 and

¹⁰⁹ Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern*, pp. 92–99.

¹¹⁰ Dan Gh. Teodor, 'Considerații privind fibulele romano-bizantine din secolele V–VII în spațiul carpato-danubiano-pontic', *Arheologia Moldovei*, 12 (1988), 197–223.

¹¹¹ To my knowledge, there is one possible exception to this rule, namely a wheel-made pot from Ipotești with an incised sign in the form of the Greek letter lambda (λ). See Roman and Ferche, 'Cercetările de la Ipotești', p. 78 fig. 7/2.

¹¹² Dulceanca 1 and 2, Bucharest-Soldat Ghivan Street, Străulești-Lunca, Budureasca (at least three specimens from different sites, one of which was published by V. I. Teodorescu, V. I. Dupoi, M. Jibotean-Peneș, and Gh. Panait, 'Budureasca, străveche și statornică vatră de civilizație la originile poporului român: Cercetările arheologice din anul 1983 privind complexele străromânești de tip Ipotești-Cândești (sec. V–VII e.n.)', *Mousaios*, 5 (1999), 91–117 with fig. 11/11), Băleni-Români, Bucharest-Dămăroaia, Ipotești (see Teodorescu, 'O nouă cultură arheologică', p. 109), Gropșani, Făcăi. See Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia', pp. 180–81. Many more examples are known from Moldavia: Ștefan cel Mare, Botoșana, Horga-Vaslui, Corlăteni-Botoșani, Davideni, Bacău, Suceava-Șipot, Dodești, Borniș, Lozna; for all of them, see Teodor, *Creștinismul*, pp. 82–90 and figs 12–15. For similar signs of earlier date (third to fourth century), see Teodor, *Creștinismul*, pp. 75–81 and figs 2–3.

¹¹³ Dulceanca 1, Bucharest-Soldat Ghivan Street, Bucharest-Ciurel, Bucharest-Cățelu Nou, Bucharest-Băneasa, Străulești-Lunca, Bucharest-Dămăroaia (for which see Rosetti, 'Siedlungen der Kaiserzeit', fig. 5/4), but also Rashkov, in Bukovina, and Bratei, in Transylvania. For all of them, see Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia', pp. 180–81.

¹¹⁴ For example, Nelu Zugravu, *Geneza creștinismului popular al românilor* (Bucharest, 1997), p. 416.

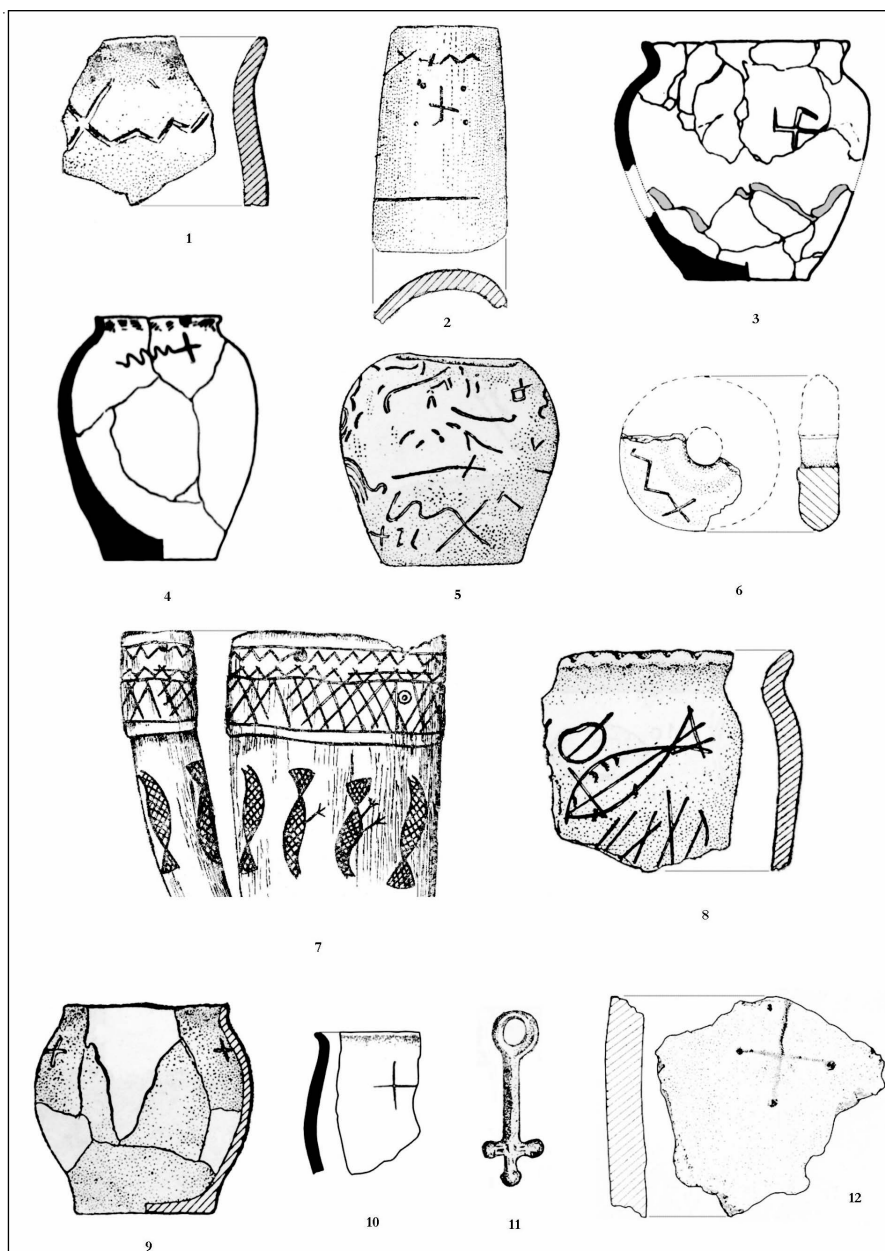


Figure 10. Incised signs and drawings with probable religious symbolism.
Media: bone awl (Lozna); clay (spindle whorl, Orhei); antler (awl, Hansca);
bronze (Cândești); handmade pottery (all others).

Botoșana, respectively.¹¹⁵ A similar sign appears on a potshard found in Bacău, on a bone handle found in Lozna, and on a spindle-whorl from Scoc (Republic of Moldova).¹¹⁶ The fact that all those signs are identical, despite the great distances between these sites, precludes any doubts as to the deliberate and indeed systematic character of this decoration. In other words, these are symbols, not just ornamentation. This conclusion is further substantiated by the association of an X-shaped cross with an image of a fish¹¹⁷ and by a cross with decorated arms imitating contemporary pectoral crosses.¹¹⁸ Whether or not X may be interpreted as a *chrismon*,¹¹⁹ the symbolism attached to those signs is without any doubt Christian.

This, however, is hardly true for swastikas, more often associated with solar cults, especially among steppe societies. Few such examples are known from Muntenia before c. 500, and all were clearly produced under Sarmatian influence, if not in a Sarmatian milieu.¹²⁰ During the sixth century, swastikas were particularly popular on sites ascribed to the Pen'kovka culture and its important Alanic component.¹²¹ On contemporary sites excavated in the Republic of Moldova, swastikas appear most

¹¹⁵ Dolinescu-Ferche, *Așezări*, fig. 52/2; Teodor, *Creștinismul*, fig. 12/4a–b. The Botoșana pot presents a number of other signs, all very difficult to interpret. In any case, two of them seem to represent animals, one of which may be a fish.

¹¹⁶ Teodor, *Creștinismul*, figs 14/3, 10/6, and 19/2. There is a clear pattern of association between cross and wave. The meaning of this association is most difficult to establish. Any biblical passage pertaining to water (fishermen, walking on water, turning water into wine, baptism, etc.) may apply, if the overall significance of this sign is Christian. In any case, the Lozna sign was associated with a simple cross. Most interesting, in my opinion, is the fact that the Bacău sign is the reversed image ('in the mirror') of those found in Dulceanca 1 and Botoșana, as if the sign itself was reproduced by means of a template. Examples of letters written in reverse, as if in the mirror, are also known from earlier periods. See George Trohani, 'Ceramica geto-dacă din secolele II a.Chr.-I p.Chr.' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Bucharest, 1999), pp. 165–66.

¹¹⁷ On a potshard from Corlăteni: Teodor, *Creștinismul*, fig. 12/5. See also the images of fish and birds associated with X-shaped crosses on an antler awl from Hansca (Republic of Moldova), see Teodor, *Creștinismul*, fig. 10/1.

¹¹⁸ On a potshard found in Dodești, see Teodor, *Creștinismul*, fig. 15/3. The image reproduces the outline of a pectoral cross, such as that found in Căndești (Teodor, *Creștinismul*, fig. 7/2). For sixth-century pectoral crosses, see now Florin Curta, 'Limes and Cross: The Religious Dimension of the Sixth-Century Danube Frontier of the Early Byzantine Empire', *Starinar*, 51 (2001), pp. 58–61.

¹¹⁹ Teodorescu, Dupoi, Jibotean-Peneș, and Panait, 'Budureasca, străveche și statornică vatră', p. 97, prefer to read the sign as an abbreviation for Christ's name.

¹²⁰ Trohani, 'Ceramica geto-dacă', pp. 156–65, with examples of swastikas on Dacian pottery of the second and third centuries AD, most likely imitating contemporary bronze mirrors with *tamgha*-signs.

¹²¹ Corman, 'L'origine ethnique', pp. 173–74 and fig. 9/1–4.

frequently on spindle whorls. In Rashkov the sign was found on the bottom of a pot, clearly imitating bronze mirrors with *tamgha*-signs, one of which was actually found on that same site. Only sites in the Walachian Plain produced so far evidence of swastikas incised on vessel shoulders, namely in the same position as crosses or X-shaped signs. It is possible that the meaning of swastikas was reinterpreted in the Walachian milieu, although we should not exclude the coexistence of Christianity and solar cults.¹²² If the latter is true, then it is important to note that one of the earliest sites producing evidence of swastikas is Străulești-Lunca, which may be dated to the first half of the sixth century,¹²³ while the latest evidence, perhaps from the last quarter of that century, is from Ciurel. Swastikas thus appear throughout most of the history of the Ipotești-Cândești culture. Raids by steppe nomads ('Huns') are mentioned several times before and after AD 500, but after 559 the Cutrigurs disappear from the main stage, to be replaced soon by the Avars.¹²⁴ It is in connection with Avars that they are last mentioned in 597.¹²⁵ Finally, the evidence of *crux quadrata* (or *decussata*), most clearly indicative of Christian symbolism, is more from earlier than from later sites (Bucharest-Soldat Ghivan Street, Străulești-Lunca, Gropșani, Făcăi).¹²⁶ This, together with other pieces of evidence, suggests that signs with Christian symbolism were fewer by 600 than in the early 500s. It is possible

¹²² See Zugravu, *Geneza creștinismului popular*, p. 334. It is, however, hard to imagine the religious pluralism of a community of a hundred individuals or so (such as those of Dulceanca 1 or Bucharest-Soldat Ghivan), in which there must have been a strong sense of communal life and values. See Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia', pp. 216–17.

¹²³ Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia', pp. 120–21. Given the nature and method (or lack thereof) of the excavation, this site cannot be dated with certainty on purely stratigraphical grounds. For Ciurel, see Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia', p. 114.

¹²⁴ Needless to say, nothing indicates that the raids of 502 and 504 crossed Muntenia. In other words, it is quite possible that these attacks came from the Middle Danube region, and in fact the raid of 504 most certainly originated from that region, since it reached Sirmium. See Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia', p. 235. For sixth-century 'Huns' and Cutrigurs, see also Veselin Beshevliev, 'Aus der Geschichte der Protobulgaren', *Etudes Balkaniques*, 6 (1970), 39–56; Dezső Simonyi, 'Pannoniai bolgárok és a kuturgur-bolgárok', *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 91 (1964), 194–200 (with a rebuttal from István Bóna, 'Das erste Auftreten der Bulgaren im Karpatenbecken: Probleme, Angaben und Möglichkeiten', *Studia turco-hungarica*, 5 (1981), 79–112); S. A. Romashov, 'Bolgarskie plemena Severnogo Prichernomor'ia v V–VII vv.', *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 8 (1992–94), 207–52; Khristo Dimitrov, 'Khuno-bălgari i onoguri-guri v stepite na severnoto Chernomorie prez VI vek', in *Bălgarite v Severnoto Prichernomorie: Izsledvaniia i materialii*, ed. by Petăr Todorov, vol. V (Veliko Tărnovo, 1996), pp. 43–48.

¹²⁵ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. by C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), pp. 274–75, trans. by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997), pp. 399–400. These Cutrigurs may have come from the Walachian Plain.

¹²⁶ The only site that may be dated after the middle of the sixth century is Dulceanca 1.

that, by that time, the influence of Christianity from fort sites across the Danube frontier in the northern Balkans has completely disappeared. In any case, there is no doubt that signs incised on pots, spindle-whorls, and other categories of artefacts to convey messages of Christian faith must be seen in connection with that frontier, since such evidence is rare on contemporary sites in Ukraine, Poland, or Slovakia.¹²⁷

On Light and Darkness

The Empire of Justinian had a short period of glory and a long agony. During all that time, the Walachian Plain was in the shadow of the Empire, with coruscations of historical interest during Roman punitive campaigns, such as that chronicled in the *Feldzugsjournal* incorporated into Theophylact Simocatta's *History*.¹²⁸ Under permanent control from the Roman bridgehead in Sucidava and already settled by Slavic groups in the east, Walachia was a land of ambiguities. What separated the Roman armies from their enemies was not the Danube, but a vast swamp, neither water nor land. Archaeology confirms this record of ambiguity: the pottery is of Roman tradition, but of 'barbarian' fabric; the settlements indicate a sedentary population, but are all ephemeral;¹²⁹ in archaeological terms, the 'Romance population' looks barbarian and the 'barbarians' Roman; the inhabitants of the Ipotești-Cândești villages were Christian, but practiced cremation; on feasts they took out their pots decorated with crosses, while wearing 'Slavic' bow fibulae or Roman brooches with bent stem, depending upon circumstances. Ambiguity takes over the historiography of the problem, as the light sometimes comes from the East, sometimes from the South.¹³⁰ Most

¹²⁷ An exception is the cross on a pot published by Fusek, *Slovensko*, pl. XIII/1, dated 570–650, but in this case the template is done by tacking, not by incision, as in Lower Danube area. It is worth mentioning at this point the issue of clay rolls with incised crosses, such as found in Lazuri (for which see Stanciu, 'Așezarea slavă timpurie', pls. 15/2, perhaps also 36/1).

¹²⁸ Beginning with Book VI, Theophylact relied on an official report or bulletin, which H. W. Haussig called *Feldzugsjournal*. See H. W. Haussig, 'Theophylakts Exkurs über die skythischen Völker', *Byzantion*, 23 (1953), 275–462; Michael Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 49–50.

¹²⁹ See Teodor, 'Ceramica de uz comun din Muntenia', chapters 6 to 10 on the shifting settlements of the Ipotești-Cândești culture. Most settlements in the Walachian Plain may not have existed for too long, judging from the absence of any deposition between houses (unlike the situation in Rashkov and Kodyn). By contrast, the contemporary Pen'kovka sites at Molești (Republic of Moldova) produced a rich array of artefacts found outside the buildings. See Ioan Tentiuc, 'Siturile din secolele V–VII de la Molești-Ialoveni (Republica Moldova)', *Arheologia Moldovei*, 21 (1998), 201–12.

¹³⁰ Curta, 'Changing Image', denounces the flagrant inconsistencies of the Romanian archaeology in terms of ethnic attributions. Stanciu, 'Cercetarea arheologică', highlights the sharp contradictions between Romanian archaeologists and foreign scholars, especially from neighbouring countries.

recently, we have learned that the Slavs are ‘Slavs’,¹³¹ which is a very different matter, since by now ambiguity has received its theoretical underpinnings. This, however, seems to be just the beginning of a long process of revision (see Fig. 11, as an example of how difficult is the concept of ‘Slavic culture’ itself).

Until now, most scholars agreed that no ‘assimilation of the Slavs’ took place in the 500s, at least not in the Walachian Plain.¹³² The main argument is the lack of archaeological evidence for the contrary, with the only, but notable, exception of the Sărata Monteoru cemetery (a site that has much more to do with Bulgarian than with Romanian history). Then there is the linguistic evidence, only recently acknowledged by archaeologists.¹³³ There are also historical arguments: assimilation is only possible when the assimilated population is in demographic decline. But the opposite seems to be true for the 500s. Judging from the written evidence, this was a period of Slavic expansion, not recession. By contrast, nothing indicates an expansion of the local, non-Slavic population, which seems to have been on the verge of disappearing. The Byzantine campaigns against both Avars and Slavs in the late 500s left the entire region devastated. What seems to have happened then is that, while all combatants seem to have been exhausted by the conflict, the demographic and ethnic configuration of the region was drastically altered. Unfortunately, there is still no archaeological way to bring more light into the darkness.

¹³¹ Curta, *Making of the Slavs*, esp. pp. 335–50. To Curta, ‘Sclavenes’ (too often viewed as ‘Slavs’) is just a label used by early Byzantine authors. Instead of referring to a discrete ethnic group on the ground, this label was an umbrella term for all barbarians viewed from the same geopolitical angle, namely as a certain kind of enemy to the Empire. Despite Procopius’s claims that the Sclavenes and the Antes spoke the same language (*Wars* 7.14.22–26, ed. by Haury, trans. by Dewing), this should not be treated as an ethnic attribute, but as a *lingua franca* in *Barbaricum*. To date, Curta’s thesis is the most coherent explanation for the fundamental incongruence between written and archaeological evidence. My own studies suggest persuasively (at least to myself) that there was no ‘proto-Slavic’ core of material culture.

¹³² Luca and Măndescu, *Rituri și ritualuri funerare*, p. 70, point to the strong evidence of ‘parallel lives’ in separate communities, with little, if any, evidence of coexistence within the same settlement.

¹³³ Ioan Pătruț, ‘Despre vechimea relațiilor lingvistice slavo-române’, *Cercetări de lingvistică*, 14 (1969), 23–29; Gheorghe Mihăilă, ‘Aspecte teoretice și istorice ale studierii raporturilor lingvistice vechi slavo-române’, *Studii și cercetări de lingvistică*, 33 (1982), 57–66; Peter R. Petrucci, *Slavic Features in the History of Rumanian* (Munich, 1999). The arguments of the former two authors were acknowledged by Madgearu, *Continuitate și discontinuitate culturală*, p. 174, when concluding that no assimilation of the Slavs could have taken place before the ninth century. Diaconu, ‘Cui aparține cultura Ciurel?’, pp. 492–93, draws a somewhat different conclusion: to him assimilation was not possible before the ninth century, because no Romance population existed in the region to assimilate the Slavs.

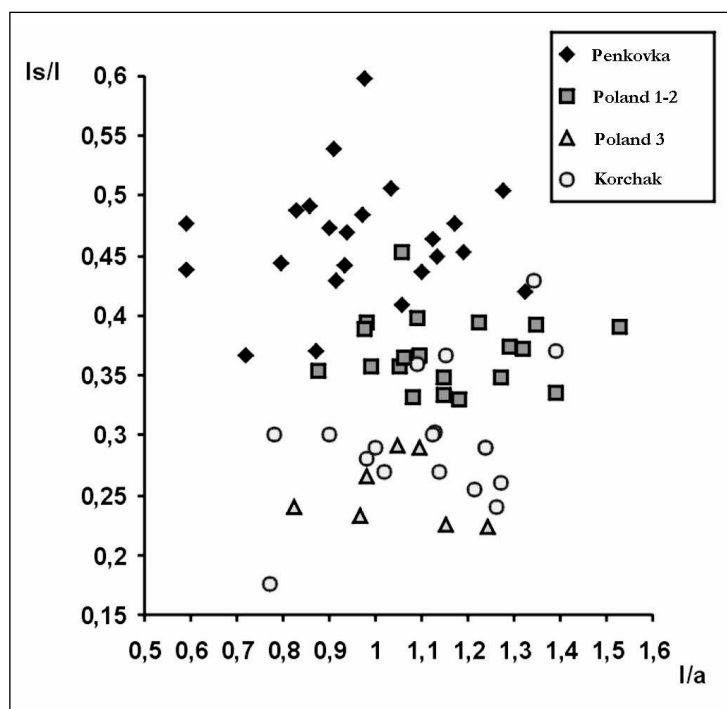


Figure 11. Height ratios: ' I/a ' is height at belly diameter, ' I_s/I ' is upper height per overall height. 'Pen'kovka' and 'Korchak' are used for comparison; 'Poland 1, 2, 3' are the main morphological types found in assemblages from south and south-east Poland. 'Poland 3' is rare in the south (the Upper Vistula valley), but frequent in the south-east (the San River basin). This suggests that the 'Slavic culture' is not homogeneous, and that the ceramic assemblages from neighbouring sites may be very different.

Ethnicity, Rulership, and Early Medieval Frontiers

MICHAEL KULIKOWSKI

In Late Antiquity, Spain was a welter of competing political groups that our sources tend to differentiate from each other in ethnic terms. Given these perceptions of difference, early medieval Spain has regularly been studied in terms of the frontiers — juridical, social, and physical — that existed between Spain's different populations. The fact that frontiers exist is not in itself a useful historical observation. Instead, frontier studies begin from the premise that certain regions, at certain times, are best understood through the abstract idea of the frontier itself. Yet it is not self-evident that frontiers have a heuristic utility to the historian; they are a useful object of study only insofar as they provide interpretative insight into the past which could not be achieved from other perspectives. Spanish Late Antiquity suggests that — in at least one place where the frontier has been invoked in the abstract — it does little to help us understand past developments and may, in fact, obscure them.

Part of the problem is that the idea of the frontier lacks an agreed-upon theoretical basis in its medieval context. This is because the terms in which frontiers and frontier societies are discussed have been borrowed from the wider field of frontier studies, bringing with them approaches that are not fully at home in the pre-modern world. As a discipline, frontier studies developed out of examinations of the experience of the American West, and have begun to have a powerful influence not just on the study of the Middle Ages, but also on the long tradition of Roman and Byzantine *Limesforschung*, which defines frontiers in terms of fixed lines of defence.¹ The

¹ Frederick Jackson Turner, inventor of the so-called Turner thesis on the centrality of the frontier to the development of American history, is the intellectual father of the discipline of frontier studies. See Ray Allen Billington, *The Genesis of the Frontier Thesis: A Study of Historical Creativity* (San Marino, 1971). Turnerian approaches, particularly as explicated by Walter Prescott Webb and W. Turrentine Jackson, have come to dominate medievalists' approaches to the frontier, most notably in recent collections of studies. E.g., *Medieval*

basic theoretical assumption of frontier studies holds that the frontier is a place of polarities, where frontier societies are created by the interaction of groups that perceive each other as different.² Precisely what accounted for perceptions of difference historically can be a matter of dispute. Ethnic difference is what medieval contemporaries saw. Early medieval ethnicity was not racial, but cultural, and could be diagnosed on the basis of external cultural factors. Clothes and hairstyles were important, language more so — *gentem lingua facit*.³ Religion and law were likewise diagnostic of ethnic difference. Meanwhile, cultural technology — not just law, but practical literacy, industrial technique, or monetization — are symptoms of difference that we diagnose more readily than contemporaries did.⁴ Regardless of the causes of difference, the close physical proximity on the frontier of groups that differ from each other forces their interaction, and in time creates a frontier society. The creative process is slow, hostility as much of a crucible as any peaceful interaction, and the interaction of different groups heightens perceptions of self. In the end, a new frontier society might be distinguished by the exaggerated display of cultural characteristics seen less starkly away from the frontier.⁵ On the other hand, the necessity of

Frontier Societies, ed. by Robert Bartlett and Angus Mackay (Oxford, 1989); Angus Mackay, 'Sociedades fronterizas', in *Almería entre culturas (siglos XIII–XVI): Actas del coloquio*, vol. 1 (Almería, 1990), pp. 3–12; *Frontière et peuplement dans le monde méditerranéen au Moyen Âge*, ed. by J.-M. Poisson (Madrid, 1992). See also Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier* (Boston, 1952); W. Turrentine Jackson, 'Comparative Frontiers as a Field for Investigation', *Western Historical Quarterly*, 9 (1978), 4–18. The most sustained argument for Turnerian ideas in a medieval context remains Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (Princeton, 1993). Theoretical and partly Turnerian ideas have also begun to make an impact on the older traditions of Roman and Byzantine *Limesforschung* (as represented in the annual European *Limes* congresses). See C. R. Whitaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore, 1994); Peter S. Wells, *The Barbarians Speak: How the Conquered Peoples Shaped Roman Europe* (Princeton, 1999).

² Owen Lattimore has shown how this Turnerian approach could work in a context as alien as imperial China. See his *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (New York, 1940) and *Studies in Frontier History* (London, 1962).

³ Marius Victorinus, *In Genes.*, PL 61:960.

⁴ The literature on medieval ethnicity is vast and growing, largely under the influence of the Vienna school of Herwig Wolfram and its doctrine of ethnogenesis. For a summary of Vienna theory and methodology, see Herwig Wolfram, *Die Germanen* (Munich, 1995) and the contributions to *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800*, ed. by Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Leyden, 1998), especially Pohl's introduction, 'Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity', pp. 17–69. In the Spanish context, Javier Pampiega, *Los germanos en España* (Pamplona, 1998). For criticism, and an extensive survey of the literature, see *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Andrew Gillett (Turnhout, 2002).

⁵ See the extended exposition of Bartlett, *Making of Europe*.

interaction with neighbours who do things differently may produce a frontier society where institutions and cultural characteristics are exchanged. In time, different groups on the frontier come to share characteristics that make them more like one another than they are like their own societies away from the frontiers.⁶ But the key, in most studies, is the polarities of difference that end up creating something new.

If we turn to early medieval Spain, we find that all these hallmarks of the frontier are present. Various Gothic armies campaigned in Spain from early in the fifth century, but these intrusions had little permanent impact.⁷ It was not until late in the century that Gothic influence became constant, but when it did the Goths arrived as aggressive newcomers and they perceived themselves, and were perceived by others, as fundamentally different from the Roman inhabitants of Spain. The evidence for this perception of difference is not far to seek. All extant sources keep the categories separate. Toponyms of the period enshrine forms of the words *Gothus* and *Romanus*, distinguishing the settlements of one identifiable group from the other.⁸ An old imperial enactment which forbade Roman provincials and barbarians to intermarry was preserved and promulgated anew by Gothic kings.⁹ All this tells us that

⁶ For example in the late Roman Rhineland, where the so-called *Reihengräber* civilization is likely to have been the product of local interaction amongst cultures on both sides of a permeable Roman border. See Guy Halsall, 'The Origins of the *Reihengräber* civilisation: Forty Years On', in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?*, ed. by J. F. Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 196–207.

⁷ For the narrative, see Luís A. García Moreno, *Historia de España Visigoda* (Madrid, 1989) and Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity, 400–1000*, 2nd edn (New York, 1995). These are based of necessity on our chief and sometimes sole primary source, the chronicle of the later fifth-century Bishop Hydatius, but both overestimate the power of the Gothic kings in Toulouse to influence events in Spain. See R. W. Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana: Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1993).

⁸ The polemic on the extent of Gothic settlement, and how we are to recognize it, is of long standing. See especially W. Reinhart, 'Sobre el asentamiento de los visigodos en la Península', *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, 28 (1945), 124–39; Gerd G. König, 'Archäologische Zeugnisse westgotischer Präsenz im 5. Jahrhundert', *Madridrer Mitteilungen*, 21 (1980), 220–47; A. J. Domínguez Monedero, 'Las necrópolis visigodas y el carácter del asentamiento visigótico en la península ibérica', in *Actas del I Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española*, vol. II (Huesca, 1986), pp. 165–86, and 'La *Chronica Caesaraugustana* y la presunta penetración popular visigoda en Hispania', *Antigüedad y Cristianismo*, 3 (1986), 61–68; Gisela Ripoll López, 'The Arrival of the Visigoths in Hispania: Population Problems and the Process of Acculturation', in *Strategies of Distinction*, ed. by Pohl and Reimitz, pp. 153–88.

⁹ *Codex Theodosianus* 3.14.1, ed. by Theodor Mommsen and Paul M. Meyer (Berlin, 1905), on which see Ana María Jiménez Garnica, 'El origen de la legislación civil visigoda sobre la prohibición de matrimonios entre Romanos y Godos: un problema de fundamento religioso', *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*, 55 (1985), 735–47; Wolfgang Liebeschuetz, 'Citizen Status and Law in the Roman Empire and the Visigothic Kingdom', in *Strategies of Distinction*, ed. by Pohl and Reimitz, pp. 131–52.

contemporaries saw a definite difference between Goth and Roman. Unfortunately, it is difficult for us to know precisely how this difference was perceived. There is no incontrovertible evidence that sixth-century Goths dressed or wore their hair very differently from non-Goths, although archaeological finds may suggest that at least some of the Gothic elite possessed a fashion sense distinct from that of their neighbours.¹⁰ Whether any Goths spoke much Gothic by the early 500s is also open to question, though it was almost certainly still the language of liturgy. In religion, Goth and Roman were distinct and Gothic religion — the Arian form of Christianity — was a badge of ethnic difference. To the non-Gothic inhabitants of Spain, the Goths were heretics and their heresy made them quintessentially outsiders. By the same token, their Arian religion was a point of ethnic pride for the Goths themselves — they had their own Gothic bishops and their own episcopal hierarchy, often immediately parallel to that of the orthodox hierarchy of the non-Gothic Romans.¹¹ Resort to one hierarchy or the other was a sure sign of ethnic difference, a sign made often and publicly enough to keep that difference visible.

The perceptions of difference and the consequent social polarities characteristic of the frontier society are definitely present in early medieval Spain. But the social changes that signal to scholars the inception of a frontier society are visible as well. In the crucible of ethnic differentiation, the Gothic identity became mythologized. We see it in the self-identification of the bishop and chronicler John of Biclar as a Goth. John wrote in the 590s and, though a Catholic, he was proud to be a Goth. The two identities had ceased to be incompatible *de jure* in 589, but John's advertisement of his Gothic identity only makes sense if the idea of the 'Goth' had been recreated in heroic terms earlier in the century. In the writings of Isidore, and in those of his voluble friend Braulio of Zaragoza, we see how the name 'Goth' has taken on a new meaning as a synonym for that which was virile, formidable, and noble. Some time in the course of the sixth century, a new Gothic identity had been constructed.¹²

Religion, too, changed dramatically, for King Reccared's conversion to orthodoxy in 589 was not just the capitulation of Gothic religion to Roman. On the contrary, it was a conscious sequel to a remarkable attempt by Reccared's father, Leovigild, to absorb facets of orthodoxy into the homoean creed of the Goths. Leovigild's plan has often been interpreted as the cynical appeasement of orthodox Christians by a

¹⁰ As maintained most recently by Gisela Ripoll López, *Toréutica de la Bética (siglos VI y VII d.c.)* (Barcelona, 1998).

¹¹ K. Schäferdiek, *Die Kirche in der Reichen der Westgoten und Suewen bis zur Errichtung der westgotischen katholischen Staatskirche* (Berlin, 1967); Dietrich Claude, *Adel, Kirche und Königtum im Westgotenreich* (Sigmaringen, 1970); José Orlandis, *La iglesia en la España visigótica y medieval* (Pamplona, 1976); Rachel Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus in the Visigothic Kingdom, 589–633* (Ann Arbor, 2000).

¹² On both John and Isidore, see especially Suzanne Teillet, *Des Goths à la nation gothique* (Paris, 1984).

cynical man.¹³ But that is not how early medieval people dealt with their God, and we should see in Leovigild's initiative a conscious striving to find common ground on which the unanimity of two different communities could be achieved. He proposed to find that common ground in a formulation that was entirely new, and such a plan was conceivable only in an environment where two very different groups were forced by their proximity to interact.

A rather more tangible example of the same process of interaction may perhaps be found in the cemetery of El Carpio de Tajo, one of the few adequately understood cemeteries of medieval Spain. Early in the cemetery's history, towards the end of the fifth century, two separate burial zones lay hundreds of metres apart from one another, and in each of these zones a different material culture obtained. As time went by, the burial zones grew closer together, and the grave goods became less and less distinctive. By the end of the sixth century, the two burial zones had converged, and one could no longer have distinguished two separate graveyards in the neighbourhood. The material culture of the inhumations, moreover, had become completely homogeneous. It is true that we cannot say for certain that the graves of El Carpio de Tajo preserve the history of Gothic and Roman populations slowly forming a new society, because we have no explicit evidence stating that the one material culture is Gothic, the other Roman. On the other hand, it is hard to see any equally plausible way of reading the evidence, and no other site in Spain offers equivalent clarity.¹⁴

The social and cultural world of early medieval Spain, then, has all the hallmarks of the frontier: aggressive newcomers, a polarity of populations that conceive themselves as ethnically different, changes that create both new identities and new societies. Perhaps for this reason, recent Spanish studies have begun to describe Visigothic Spain as a frontier society, *una sociedad veritablemente fronteriza*.¹⁵ One thing is lacking, however, and that is the frontier itself. We cannot conceptualize early medieval Spain as any sort of physical frontier, regardless of how we define that frontier or whether we speak in terms of the entire Iberian Peninsula or just parts of it. Early medieval Spain was post-Roman, and in the Roman period, Spain had not been a frontier, but part of a peaceful imperial interior tied together by good roads

¹³ Most fundamentally, in Karl Friedrich Stroheker, 'Leowigild', *Die Welt als Geschichte*, 5 (1939), 446–85 [reprinted in Karl Friedrich Stroheker, *Germanentum und Spätantike* (Zürich, 1965), pp. 134–91].

¹⁴ On El Carpio, see especially Gisela Ripoll López, *La necrópolis visigoda de El Carpio de Tajo (Toledo)* (Madrid, 1985), and 'La necrópolis visigoda de El Carpio de Tajo: Una nueva lectura a partir de la topochronología y los adornos personales', *Butlletí de la Reial Acadèmia Catalana de Belles Arts de Sant Jordi*, 7–8 (1993–1994), 187–250.

¹⁵ See, for example, the studies in *Sociedades y fronteras en el mundo antiguo*, *Studia Historica, Historia Antigua*, 16 (Salamanca, 1998), especially Celine Martin, 'In confinio externis gentibus: la percepción de la frontera en el reino visigodo', pp. 267–80, and Dionisio Pérez-Sánchez, 'Defensa y territorio en la sociedad peninsular hispana durante la antigüedad tardía (ss. V–VII)', pp. 281–99.

that ignored the exigencies of terrain. That is to say, the Gothic kings did not inherit a Roman frontier zone in Spain, which means that there was no pre-existing system of man-made defences for them to inherit either. On the other hand, like all the western barbarians, the Goths had long experience of how a Roman *limes* worked, not least thanks to a hundred years enmeshed in the politics of Gaul. Despite this, no Gothic kings attempted to re-create Roman-style frontiers in Spain. Even after Leovigild had imposed a stable Gothic monarchy on the peninsula, the Goths made no attempt to create physical borders to separate them from their neighbours. The Pyrenees, for instance, had not been perceived as a natural frontier by the Romans, however much we may see them as such. Instead, the emperors had constructed a few small towers in the chief passes, which were garrisoned only intermittently, in times of crisis. In the Gothic period, from the 510s on, the western Pyrenees had some claim to separate the Gothic from the Frankish kingdom. The passes were nevertheless equally ungarrisoned.¹⁶

The same picture obtains elsewhere in the peninsula. It is often imagined that a Roman-style fortified *limes* existed in south-eastern Spain during the later sixth century, after the Byzantine government of Justinian had imposed a precarious and unwanted protectorate on the hitherto independent cities of the region.¹⁷ There is not, in fact, any archaeological evidence for the existence of that frontier, merely the a priori assumption that because Byzantine governors and Gothic kings confronted each other in southern Spain they must necessarily have had some means of keeping their territories separate.¹⁸ Yet only one urban site in the whole of what might possibly have constituted the zone between Gothic and imperial control — Begastris in Murcia — shows signs of late antique fortification, and we have absolutely no idea to which power, if either, the city may have belonged.¹⁹ More to the point, even if one accepts the existence of a Byzantine frontier in southern Spain, it is clear that the Gothic kings chose not to imitate the example before them and build their own systems of fortresses, either there in the south-east or anywhere else.

¹⁶ Oddly, the only Pyrenean site that probably sustained a Gothic garrison was Clausurae (modern Les-Cluses in the French Pyrenees), which lay not between Spain and Frankish Gaul, but between Gothic Tarraconensis and Gothic Septimania in Gaul. See G. Castellvi, 'Clausurae (Les-Cluses, P.-O.): forteresses-frontières du Bas-Empire romain', in *Frontières terrestres, frontières célestes dans l'Antiquité*, ed. by A. Rouselle (Perpignan, 1995), pp. 81–117.

¹⁷ E.g., Luis A. García Moreno, 'Organización militar de Bizancio en la Península Ibérica (ss. VI–VII)', *Hispania*, 33 (1973), 5–22; Margarita Vallejo Girvés, *Bizancio y la España tar-doantigua (ss. V–VIII): un capítulo de historia mediterránea* (Alcalá de Henares, 1993); Pablo Fuentes Hinojo, 'Sociedad, ejército y administración en la provincia bizantina de *Spania*', in *Sociedades y fronteras*, pp. 301–30.

¹⁸ Against the traditional view, see Gisela Ripoll López, 'Acerca de la supuesta frontera entre el *Regnum Visigothorum* y la *Hispania* bizantina', *Pyrenae*, 27 (1996), 251–67.

¹⁹ On Begastris, see especially the articles collected in *Begastris: Imágen y problemas de su historia* (Murcia, 1984).

A partial explanation for this may lie in the way in which Gothic kings conceived of their rule: it was a rule over peoples, over a *gens Gothorum*, later over conquered Basques and Sueves.²⁰ Yet at the same time, Gothic kings ruled over territory that had been a Roman province, and they inherited from Rome the tendency to visualize geography in terms of itineraries between cities rather than as abstract geographical space.²¹ Dominion was conceived of as control over points on an itinerary, in the Spanish case normally cities or roadside rest stations.²² The Gothic kings visualized dominion in the same terms, but the correlation between the *gentes* over whom the king ruled and actual swathes of territory was imprecise. The example of Gothic Victoriacum may illustrate the point. To commemorate his defeat over the Basques — and to ensure the permanence of his victory — Leovigild founded a new city and gave it the name Victoriacum, in a very Roman gesture.²³ This foundation, an urban point whose modern identity is disputed,²⁴ proclaimed Leovigild's dominion over another people, the Vascones, and it was planted in their midst. But just as no line had separated Goth from Basque before its foundation, so the new city of Victoriacum never formed part of a Gothic northern frontier.

Regardless of the explanation, the Roman notion of a linear frontier made no headway among the Gothic kings of Spain, and they always lacked Roman-style frontiers. A fortiori, they lacked the sort of expansionary frontier, modelled on the American West, which has informed most studies of medieval frontiers. When Gothic kings first seriously tried to control the whole peninsula in the early sixth century, they were not expanding from a Gothic heartland. The kingdom of Toulouse was almost entirely lost to them and they were adrift in Spain, struggling as one power amongst others at a very local level. They were aggressive outsiders, but there was no home base, either cultural or political, from which they moved or to which they could return. Try as we might, we can find no physical frontier in Visigothic Spain. And yet Visigothic Spain has all the characteristics that we associate with frontier societies and is increasingly cited as an example of just such a frontier society. This paradox, I would suggest, has consequences both for our treatment of Spanish history and also for the way we talk about frontiers elsewhere in early medieval Europe.

²⁰ See especially Teillet, *Des Goths à la nation gothique*.

²¹ Charles Higounet, 'A propos de la perception de l'espace au Moyen Age', in *Media in Francia: Mélanges offerts à Karl Ferdinand Werner* (Paris, 1989), pp. 257–68; Patrick Gautier-Dalché, 'De la liste à la carte: limite et frontière dans la géographie et la cartographie de l'Occident médiéval', in *Frontière et peuplement*, ed. by Poisson, pp. 20–33.

²² This could lead, and in the Roman period had led, to the creation of a linear frontier in the shape of a defended itinerary. See especially Benjamin Isaac, 'The Meaning of the Terms *Limes* and *Limitanei*', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 78 (1988), 125–47.

²³ John of Biclar, *Chronica*, ed. by Th. Mommsen (Berlin, 1894), MGH AA 11:216.

²⁴ It is either modern Vitoria in Guipúzcoa or Vitoriano in Álava.

What is at issue is the utility of concepts derived from frontier studies for the understanding of the early Middle Ages. In the absence of physically apparent frontiers we cannot reasonably describe Visigothic Spain as a frontier society. In the Gothic period, we have a mingling of populations, outsiders and insiders, hostile and friendly, in a polarized atmosphere of perceived ethnic difference. Their interaction produced a new society, different from anything that had gone before, and different from anything outside the zone of their interaction: no one would deny that the cultural synthesis of seventh-century Spain was a unique achievement. And yet all this took place without the benefit of a frontier zone. That is to say, the social change and cultural genesis regularly associated with the frontier experience cannot be explained by the existence of a frontier. The reason for this, I would suggest, is that the political conditions for the creation of a frontier zone were entirely absent. Without some sort of political force to impose a correlation between culture, ethnicity, and geographical limits, frontiers cannot exist in any meaningful sense. In the whole of the early Middle Ages, only the Arab and the Carolingian conquests provided this sort of stable context.²⁵ Elsewhere, we should try to understand early medieval history, its social change and cultural genesis, in terms of frontier studies only where they can be shown to have explanatory utility — which is to say where we have a clear idea of what we mean when we use the word frontier and a clearer sense of why, in any given case, the frontier is a useful way of trying to explain the medieval past.²⁶

²⁵ For the Arab-Christian frontier in Spain, studies are legion: Eduardo Manzano Moreno, *La frontera de Al-Andalus en época de los Omeyas* (Madrid, 1991); *La Marche supérieure de l'Al-Andalus et l'Occident chrétien*, ed. by Philippe Sénac (Madrid, 1991); Eduardo Manzano Moreno, 'Christian-Muslim Frontier in Al-Andalus: Idea and Reality', in *The Arab Influence in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Dionysius A. Agius and Richard Hitchcock (Reading, 1994), pp. 83–99; Philippe Sénac, 'La frontière d'Al-Andalus au haut Moyen Age', *Le Moyen Age*, 100 (1994), 249–554.

²⁶ An early version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Medieval Academy of America held in Austin, Texas in April 2000. The present version is slightly expanded from a paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association held in San Francisco in January 2002. I should like to thank the organizer of that session (and editor of the present volume) for his invitation to participate and the session commentator, Professor Walter Goffart, for his helpful criticism.

Frontiers and Ethnic Identities: Some Final Considerations

WALTER POHL

When Notker of St Gall was a boy, the old man Adalbert told him stories of Charlemagne's wars in which he had once fought. Much later, in the year 884, the monk Notker used these legendary narratives in the second book of his *Gesta Karoli*. The Avar campaigns (791–96) are thus described on the basis of oral lore that spans almost a century. The Avar barriers that the Frankish army had encountered had especially impressed Adalbert. Notker described them as nine rings of fortification, for which he used the German word *hegin*. Each of these (probably concentric) circles contained a space as wide as the distance between Zürich and Constance (about 50 km), and was 20 ft high and as wide, constructed from the trunks of oaks, beeches, and spruce, filled with clay and stones with trees planted on top.¹ This is one of the most detailed descriptions of a defensive construction transmitted from the early Middle Ages. Its form is not at all unlikely, although its dimensions are.

Notker's fantastic description combines two phenomena attested by contemporary reports from Charlemagne's Avar campaigns. On the one hand, in 791 the Frankish army encountered defences (*firmitates*, *munitiones*, *machinationes*) on both sides of the Danube at the Kamp River and on the slopes of the Vienna woods, at quite some distance from the frontier, which the Avars abandoned as the enemy approached.²

¹ Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.1, ed. by R. Rau (Darmstadt, 1960), p. 376. For the Avar rings, see Walter Pohl, *Die Awaren: Ein Steppenvolk in Europa, 567–822 n. Chr.*, 2nd edn (Munich, 2002), p. 307 (an English translation is in preparation for publication with Cornell University Press). I would like to thank Helmut Reimitz for comments and Kirsten de Vries for correcting my English.

² *Royal Frankish Annals* a. 791, ed. by F. Kurze (Hannover, 1895), MGH SS rer. Germ. 6:88; *Annals of Metz* a. 791, ed. by B. de Simson (Hannover, 1905; repr., Stuttgart, 1979), MGH SS rer. Germ. 10:79; Pohl, *Die Awaren*, p. 316.

On the other hand, contemporaries called the Avar residence 'ring' without mentioning any defensive constructions or any attempt to defend it in 795, when a small Frankish force plundered it, or in 796, when Pippin's army occupied it.³ It is possible that it was surrounded by a demarcation similar to, though not as durable as, the dike around Pliska (see Paolo Squatriti's contribution in this volume), which may have delineated the zone of the qagan's residence, called *ordu* in central Asian sources. The Arab traveller Tamim ibn Bahr, for instance, has described the circular shape of the residence of the Uyghur qagan in the 830s, with an outer ring formed by subordinate troops at a distance of four days' marches from the centre.⁴

The late Carolingian idea of a huge wall that surrounded the country of the Avars (that Frankish authors identified with the Huns) stuck. Characteristically, views could become rather blurred as to whether the Avars had built the barriers to defend themselves or whether Charlemagne had built them to protect the Christian countries from the Avars. Some time later, after the Hungarian raids, the wall acquired an apocalyptic significance and provided a model to explain where this new people had come from. In the 960s, the Saxon historiographer Widukind explained that the Avars (whom he traditionally calls Huns) had not been destroyed by Charlemagne, but just 'pushed across the Danube and locked inside a huge wall, so that they were prevented from the usual raids against other peoples'.⁵ Only King Arnulf at the end of the ninth century had carelessly destroyed that wall in his wars against the Moravians, and the Avars-Hungarians could resume their raids. At about the same time Liudprand of Cremona told a similar story about the Hungarians being separated from the Carolingian Empire by barriers (*clusae*).⁶ This is in fact an apocalyptic motif based on the Bible. In the book of Revelations (20. 2–8), an angel binds Satan for one thousand years, at the end of which he breaks loose and collects the hordes of Gog and Magog to attack the holy city. In the early Middle Ages, many believed that Alexander the Great had shut the apocalyptic steppe peoples Gog and Magog behind the Caucasus, but that they would eventually break loose. It is an idea that also became current in medieval Hungarian historiography, for instance in the thirteenth-

³ *Royal Frankish Annals* a. 796, MGH SS rer. Germ. 6:98; Pohl, *Die Awaren*, p. 306.

⁴ V. Minorsky, 'Tamim Ibn Bahr's Journey to the Uyghurs', *Papers of the British School for Oriental and Asian Studies*, 12 (1948), 275–305. For further examples, see Svetlana A. Pletneva, *Die Chasaren* (Leipzig, 1979), pp. 47 and 79.

⁵ Widukind, *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 1.19, ed. by A. Bauer and R. Rau (Darmstadt, 1997), p. 46: 'Victi autem a Magno Karolo et trans Danubium pulsi ac ingenti vallo circumclusi, prohibiti sunt a consueta gentium depopulatione.'

⁶ Liudprand, *Antapodosis* 1.5, ed. by A. Bauer and R. Rau (Darmstadt, 1997), p. 254: 'Ungariorum gens [...] nobis omnibus tunc temporis [i.e., of the Byzantine emperor Leo VI (886–912), and of King Arnulf (887–99)] habebatur ignota. Quibusdam namque difficillimis separata a nobis erat interpositionibus, quas clusas nominat vulgus, ut neque a meridianam neque ad occidentalem plagam exeundi habuerit facultatem.'

century *Gesta Hungarorum*.⁷ There was in fact an actual wall in the Carpathian basin that could inspire such ideas: up to this day, there are ancient dikes, or earthen ramparts, east of the Danube and along the Tisza River, stretching for many miles. These walls have variously been dated between the fourth and the eleventh centuries AD, and attributed to Romans, Sarmatians, Avars, Bulgars, Moravians, or Hungarians.⁸

The example of the 'Avar walls' is a good starting point for raising one more time some of the central questions of this volume.⁹ First, there were visible walls or dikes in the landscape that might stretch for dozens of miles. Second, these were often attributed to prestigious rulers of the past, as in the case of the Dobrudjan dikes that were supposed to have been built by Khan Asparuch.¹⁰ But attributions could change over time, up to the point that Avar defences were reinterpreted as walls built by Charlemagne to keep them at bay. Such retrospective explanations need not always be true, and in reality, systems of dikes may have grown over many centuries, and some of them may go back to prehistoric times. Third, not least because there was a lasting reputation to be won, some rulers actually seem to have sought the prestige that erecting such an imposing structure could confer, even if their military use was at least doubtful (which is the well-argued explanation Paolo Squatriti offers for the dikes in Dobrudja). Fourth, such structures did not necessarily run along actual political borders, but they must have derived some of their impact from representing a symbolic boundary, the significance of which can hardly be deciphered. Some may have marked off an inner sphere of power or a hierarchic order of space, as in Notker's example.

That much at least has become clear by now: barriers do not necessarily mark, or help to defend, boundaries between powers. Still, we know that some borders might become highly charged with symbolical meanings. Thus the frontier between Franks and (Avar or Magyar) 'Huns' was not only a dividing line between Christians and pagans, but could come to be regarded as the border between good and evil, salvation and apocalypse altogether. Such frontiers, as in the examples cited above, tended to be pictured in terms of walls or other visible structures that might prevent

⁷ *Gesta Hungarorum* 1, ed. by Gabriel Silagi, *Die Gesta Hungarorum des anonymen Notars: Die älteste Darstellung der ungarischen Geschichte* (Sigmaringen, 1991), p. 32: 'Ab orientali vero parte vicina Scithie fuerunt gentes "Gog et Magog", quos inclusit Magnus Alexander.'

⁸ A recent but not very convincing hypothesis: Martin Eggers, *Das 'Großmährische Reich': Realität oder Fiktion? Eine Neuinterpretation der Quellen zur Geschichte des mittleren Donauraumes* (Stuttgart, 1995).

⁹ See also two recent collections of studies on this topic, *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (Vienna, 2000); and *The Transformation of Frontiers: From Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. by W. Pohl, I. Wood, and H. Reimitz (Leiden, 2001).

¹⁰ In the eleventh-century *Vision of Isaiah*; see Paolo Squatriti, 'Moving Earth and Making Difference: Dikes and Frontiers in Early Medieval Bulgaria' (in this volume).

enemies from crossing them even by their sheer presence or their magic quality. Perhaps we should not discuss the strategic and symbolic significance of dikes and barriers as alternatives. Symbolic certainly did not mean ineffective in the early medieval world. Even very well-fortified cities needed supernatural protection to withstand attacks, for instance Constantinople, which was protected by the Virgin Mary against the Avar siege of 626, or Thessalonica, which many believed owed its invulnerability in many attacks to St Demetrius.¹¹

The many impressive walls of defence, dikes, earthworks, and other defensive constructions have not been taken into account sufficiently in most recent debates about early medieval frontiers. They usually defy precise dating, but many can roughly be dated back to Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. The Danevirke was erected near Schleswig in at least three successive stages between the ninth and the eleventh centuries.¹² Paolo Squatriti and Rasho Rashev discuss some striking examples from Bulgaria. Barbarians must have constructed many of these dikes. In most cases, these walls cannot easily be identified with any stable political frontiers (for instance those in Hungary or in Dobrudja). It is up to debate whether or not they resulted from specific military situations that prompted an intense defensive effort, or set out to create symbolic obstacles for enemies.

Two of the rare examples where defensive walls can be traced in written sources seem to provide contradictory evidence in this respect. One is the long wall constructed by the Tervingi led by Athanaric when an attack from the Huns was imminent in c. AD 375: 'This new situation and the fear that there was worse to follow constrained him to erect a high rampart extending from the Gerasus (Siret) to the Danube and skirting the territory of the Taifali. He believed that this hastily but carefully constructed barrier would ensure his security.' But in spite of this ambitious construction, most of the Goths decided to abandon him for the security the Roman Empire could offer.¹³ Another famous example is 'Offa's Dyke', an earthen construction stretching for over 100 km, roughly along the modern Welsh borderline. According to Asser's late ninth-century *Life of King Alfred*, it had been constructed by King Offa of Mercia (757–96) against the Welsh kingdom of

¹¹ Pohl, *Die Awaren*, p. 252; Paul Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, 2 vols (Paris, 1979–81).

¹² H. H. Andersen, 'Danewerk', in *Reallexikon der germanische Altertumskunde*, ed. by Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, and Heiko Steuer, vol. VI (Berlin, 1984), pp. 236–43, and 'Danevirke – nye perspektiver: Das Danewerk – neue Perspektiven', in *Wall und Graben: Befestigungen von der Steinzeit bis ins Mittelalter in Schleswig und Holstein*, ed. by V. Arnold, J. Köhl, and A. Thygesen (Rendsburg, 1995), pp. 43–46; D. Unverhau, *Das Danewerk 1842: Beschreibung und Aufmaß* (Neumünster, 1988).

¹³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 31.3, English trans. by W. Hamilton (Harmondsworth, 1986), p. 415. See also Herwig Wolfram, *Die Goten*, 4th edn (Munich, 2000), p. 80; Radu Vulpe, *Le vallum de la Moldavie inférieure et le 'mur' d'Athanaric* (The Hague, 1957), who associated Athanaric's wall to the remains of earthworks between Ploscuțeni and Stoicani.

Powys.¹⁴ Apart from the remains of impressive earthwork, little has been left there to prove that it was ever manned, or acquired any defensive significance. Remarkably, the sources talk about raids by the Mercians in the period of its construction, more than about the threat from Powys, which the Mercians overran in 822. The attribution to Offa might very well be a retrospective explanation. But if we believe it, the wall was part of an affirmative strategy by an expansive power rather than a defensive measure in the face of an aggressive, stronger neighbour. It demonstrated the power of the Mercians, marked off a zone of expansion, and 'it created a border' that served as legal boundary in later English law.¹⁵ Both defensive constructions, different as their aims may have been, were built systematically in a planned effort which was attributed to the decision of an important ruler.

Offa's Dyke is often compared to Hadrian's Wall, and perhaps Offa wanted to imitate the imperial grandeur of the Roman defences in northern England. The Roman *limes*, in spite of all its fortifications, was not just a line of defence, but had symbolic functions as well as that of control of movements on both sides and maintenance of communication along the frontier; it also created a highly romanized frontier zone that attracted barbarians and facilitated economic exchange and cultural transfer.¹⁶ Florin Curta has summarized the recent discussion in his introduction to this volume. It is a matter of debate in what ways the Franks of the ninth and tenth centuries modelled the organization of the Elbe frontier after the example of the Roman *limes*, as Matthias Hardt shows — the *limes* ideology was available, but were there comparable forms of defensive architecture and frontier organization?¹⁷ Joachim Henning impressively demonstrates in his contribution how similar the forts on both sides of the border looked. Recent scholarship has also deflated the old idea of the Carolingian and Ottonian march as a definite and stable form of defensive organization along the eastern frontier of the Frankish realm.¹⁸

¹⁴ Asser, *Life of Alfred* 14, trans. by Simon Keynes, in *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (London, 1983), p. 71. See also W. Davis, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1982), pp. 109–10; C. Fox, *Offa's Dyke: A Field Survey of the Western Frontier Works of Mercia in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries AD* (London, 1955); D. Hill, 'Offa's and Wat's Dykes – Some Exploratory Work on the Frontier between Celts and Saxons', in *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape*, ed. by T. Rowley (Oxford, 1974), pp. 102–07.

¹⁵ Davis, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 110. See also C. A. Snyder, *The Britons* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 178–79.

¹⁶ C. R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore, 1994).

¹⁷ See also Hansjürgen Brachmann, 'Der Limes Sorabicus: Geschichte und Wirkung', *Zeitschrift für Archäologie*, 25 (1991), 177–207.

¹⁸ Matthias Hardt and Hans K. Schulze, 'Altmark und Wendland als deutsch-slawische Kontaktzone', in *Wendland und Altmark in historischer und sprachwissenschaftlicher Sicht*, ed. by R. Schmidt (Lüneburg, 1992), pp. 1–44; Karl Brunner, *Herzogtümer und Marken: Vom*

Normally, late Romans, Byzantines, and most post-Roman kingdoms in Western Europe did not seek to protect their frontiers by 'long walls', but relied on forts, walled cities, and on fortifications that guarded access roads or mountain passes.¹⁹ The *kleisurai* mentioned by Ralph-Johannes Lilie are a case in point. Another one are the *clusae* at the end of the Alpine pass roads in Northern Italy, for instance in the Val di Susa east of Torino, in the Adige Valley north of Verona, or the *claustra Alpium Iuliarum* to the east.²⁰ The Italian *clusae* fell into partial disuse after the Gothic war. But in the middle of the eighth century, the Lombard kings Ratchis and Aistulf, under the threat of Frankish attacks in conjunction with papal Rome, used them to establish a sophisticated system for the control of travellers, using sealed letters and a royal visa that had to be shown on the way back.²¹ Pragmatic and ideological uses of frontiers clearly differ in this example. What mattered in practice was the control of movements throughout the kingdom, and the *clusae* were ideal for that purpose (although most of them were quite a way inside the kingdom). In the frontier zone adjacent to the duchy of Rome, travellers had to be controlled along the main roads, and border posts were not even envisaged in the laws issued by Ratchis and Aistulf. The *clusae* were also used to bar the way for invading Frankish armies, but could too easily be avoided. 'Single significant localities', for instance the Suleyman Köy pillar, also mattered along the Bulgar-Byzantine border, as Paolo Squatriti argues in this volume. In antiquity, large and intermediate spaces were perceived by single landmarks, and by routes that linked them (as shown, for instance, on the *Tabula Peutingeriana*).²² This does not mean that conceptions of space were undifferentiated, and sufficed to maintain Roman rule in a vast Empire for half a millennium. But it is a cognitive mode that is very different from our perception of geographical space by maps drawn to scale.

Ungarnsturm bis ins 12. Jahrhundert (Vienna, 1994); Herwig Wolfram, 'The Creation of the Carolingian Frontier System c. 800', in *Transformation of Frontiers*, ed. by Pohl, Wood, and Reimitz, pp. 233–46; Gerd Althoff, 'Saxony and the Elbe Slavs in the Tenth Century', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. by T. Reuter, vol. III (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 267–92.

¹⁹ A basic study is C. Foss and D. Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications: An Introduction* (Pretoria, 1986).

²⁰ S. Gasparri, 'La frontiera in Italia (sec. VI–VIII): Osservazioni su un tema controverso', in *Città, castelli, campagne nei territori di frontiera (sec. VI–VII)*, ed. by G. P. Brogiolo (Mantova, 1995), pp. 9–19; E. Mollo, 'Le chiuse: realtà e rappresentazioni mentali del confine alpino nel medioevo', *Bollettino storico bibliografico subalpino*, 84 (1986), 333–90; Jaroslav Šašel, 'L'organizzazione del confine orientale d'Italia nell'Alto Medioevo', in his *Opera selecta*, ed. by R. Bratož and M. Šašel Kos (Ljubljana, 1992), pp. 813–29; Peter Štih, 'Die Ostgrenze Italiens im Frühmittelalter', in *Grenze und Differenz*, ed. by Pohl and Reimitz, pp. 19–38.

²¹ Walter Pohl, 'Frontiers in Lombard Italy: The Laws of Ratchis and Aistulf', in *Transformation of Frontiers*, ed. by Pohl, Wood, and Reimitz, pp. 117–42.

²² K. Brodersen, *Terra Cognita: Studien zur römischen Raumerfassung* (Hildesheim, 1995).

Concepts of linear frontiers played little part in post-Roman political reality.²³ When territories changed their ruler, the sources as a rule do not talk about the new frontiers but about the fortresses, *civitates*, or provinces concerned. Again, eighth-century Italy is a good example, where the popes started a campaign for the recuperation of territories that had once belonged to the Byzantine exarchate but had fallen under Lombard rule. The papal agenda always consisted of lists of forts and cities, sometimes explicitly specifying that their respective territories were included.²⁴ Interestingly, the modern German word for 'border', *Grenze*, is a Slavic loan-word that came to be used in the later Middle Ages, parallel to the diffusion of the concept of a linear frontier.²⁵ All this has often been taken as proof of the incapacity to use the abstract concept of a delineated territorial realm in the early Middle Ages.²⁶ Were those who built the dikes in Dobrudja, Schleswig, the Carpathian basin, or the foothills of Wales better equipped to comprehend the idea of the territorial state than the heirs of Roman cities and provinces? Rather, the attitudes towards frontiers in the early medieval West indicate a sophisticated concept of political space, a differentiated landscape of power. A kingdom was not simply a definite stretch of territory in the way in which modern nations are shown in uniform colours. It was perceived as a complex structure, a network of centres of power and lines of communication. Notionally, it was defined by its frontiers — *finēs*, the plural of 'frontiers', was the most common word for 'territory'. There is clear evidence for a territorial notion of the *regnum* and the *patria* in the early Middle Ages.²⁷ But in practice, it was regarded as a complex political landscape.

²³ This may have been a little different in Byzantium. The term *horos* in Byzantine Greek carried a linear connotation. See Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204* (Cambridge, 2000).

²⁴ Pohl, 'Frontiers'.

²⁵ H.-W. Nickels, 'Von der "Grenitze" zur Grenze: Die Grenzidee des lateinischen Mittelalters (6.–15. Jhd.)', *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte*, 128 (1992), 1–29; see also R. Schneider, 'Lineare Grenzen: Vom frühen bis zum späten Mittelalter', in *Grenzen und Grenzregionen. Frontières et régions frontalières. Borders and Border Regions*, ed. by W. Haubrichs and R. Schneider (Saarbrücken, 1994), pp. 51–68.

²⁶ For a critical discussion, see H. W. Goetz, 'Concepts of Realm and Frontiers from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: Some Preliminary Remarks', in *Transformation of Frontiers*, ed. by Pohl, Wood, and Reimitz, pp. 73–82. See also *Regna et Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World*, ed. by H. W. Goetz, J. Jarnut, and W. Pohl (Leiden, 2003).

²⁷ See, for instance, Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* 1.24, 2.4, 3.6, 4.46, 5.34, and 5.36, ed. K.-L. Bethmann and G. Waitz (Hannover, 1878), pp. 61–62, 74, 95, 135, and 156. See Walter Pohl, 'Staat und Herrschaft im Frühmittelalter: Überlegungen zum Forschungsstand', in *Staat im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by S. Airlie, W. Pohl, and H. Reimitz (Vienna, forthcoming).

Frontiers acquired, as we have seen, many ideological and symbolic meanings, and tended to become boundaries of significance.²⁸ From Antiquity to the Middle Ages, one boundary ran across Europe and the Middle East that was especially charged with meaning. In Antiquity, it was the Roman frontier, regarded and stylized as the boundary between civilization and the barbarians, between the *populus Romanus* and the *gentes*, the barbarian nations. Late Antiquity transformed this notion, and as the Roman order dissolved in many parts of Europe and new kingdoms established their power, the boundary that counted became that of Christendom: between the *populus Christianus* and the *gentes*, the pagans.²⁹ It is no coincidence that most of the contributions in this volume deal with this boundary that was so deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of contemporaries. It was a dividing line that was intended to include all who belonged to a divinely sanctioned order with a sense of mission and superiority and to exclude barbarians and pagans who were regarded as barely human in their ignorance of all that represented a higher form of humanity. But even on the ideological plane, this distinction was sometimes criticized by contemporaries (such as Salvian of Marseille in the fifth century) as too conveniently masking the moral insufficiency of Christians and Romans.³⁰ The frontier was also bridged by ethnographic curiosity and the wish to establish some conceptual order in a potentially threatening world beyond civilization. And it was permeable to political alliances and military needs, to trade and migration. What Roman authors tended to picture as 'the Other', contrary in almost all respects to the Roman order, was linked in many ways to the late antique world. Perhaps the most important link between the Empire and its barbarian periphery was the growing need for barbarian soldiers in the Roman army.

In these respects, the Romans 'created' their barbarians, as Florin Curta argues in his contribution to this volume.³¹ This is not to say that barbarians had no way in which to establish communities, develop ethnic identities, or even form wide empires (as Huns or Avars did). But such processes of identity formation happened in the shadow of Rome. They were in many ways, and to a different extent, entangled with the deliberate aims and the less obvious needs and dynamics of the Roman system. Roman diplomacy polarized barbarian societies by looking for dependable allies and treating others as enemies, establishing kings and stamping out potentially

²⁸ Helmut Reimitz, 'Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen im karolingischen Mitteleuropa', in *Grenzen und Grenzregionen*, ed. by Haubrichs and Schneider, pp. 105–66.

²⁹ See Ian N. Wood, 'Missionaries and the Christian Frontier', in *Transformation of Frontiers*, ed. by Pohl, Wood, and Reimitz, pp. 209–18.

³⁰ See Michael Maas, 'Ethnicity, Orthodoxy, and Community in Salvian of Marseilles', in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?*, ed. by J. Drinkwater and H. Elton (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 275–84.

³¹ See also Hugh Elton, 'Defining Romans, Barbarians and the Roman Frontier', in *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, ed. R. W. Mathisen and H. S. Sivan (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 126–35.

dangerous power centres. For many generations, the Empire's demand for military manpower attracted the most ambitious and active elements from barbarian societies, enhanced the prestige of successful warriors, and thus gradually militarized the barbarian frontier societies. It treated barbarians according to ethnic definitions and privileged stable communities. Even those who opposed and attacked the power of Rome needed to rally more firmly around their common purpose and sense of identity. These are the processes that Florin Curta detects in the cases of the fourth-century Tervingi and the sixth-century *Sklavenoi* alike. Only the results differed, once Goths and Slavs had settled in Roman provinces. The Goths generally sought integration in the late Roman infrastructure and the privileges that the Roman tax system could offer to soldiers who were supposed to uphold the imperial order; eventually, they became masters of Roman provinces. Gothic identities in Spain — Michael Kulikowski's example in this volume — and elsewhere were created and transformed in this process and soon involved Roman and other inhabitants of the provinces where Goths now ruled. The notion of a distinctive Gothic identity had been sharpened in the course of their conflicts with the Empire, both by Roman observers and, presumably, by Goths themselves. This symbolic capital allowed Gothic diversity to become the focus of a system of military rule in which in reality ethnic boundaries became quite blurred.³² The notional divide that had once separated Romans and barbarians crumbled, and almost vanished once the Third Council of Toledo had re-established confessional unity in the Visigothic kingdom in 589.

The Slavs obviously did not strive to, or at least did not manage to, take over the Byzantine infrastructure; even if they came as warriors, they settled as peasants, and the tax system, together with the cities and hierarchies that depended on it, collapsed. It seems that in the absence of a close coexistence with the late Roman order, Slavic political structures and ethnic identities were generally slower to evolve. For centuries, Latin and Greek authors designated these barbarians quite generally as Slavs (or, using the Germanic heteronym, Wends), and only rarely used more specific ethnic names. The Slavs north of the lower Danube in the sixth century were not perceived as having any particular ethnic identity, just as Samo's *Sclavi coinomenti Winedi* in the western fringes of the seventh-century Avar qaganate.³³ Their barbarian otherness was thus fixed by the ancient ideological boundary between civilization/Christianity and barbarians/paganism. Perhaps this was also the result of a temporary decline of the ability of the early Byzantine and the Merovingian world to organize and comprehend the barbarians beyond their borders in the way the Romans had done. When St Columbanus, in the early seventh century, intended to

³² Walter Pohl, 'Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity', in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800*, ed. by W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (Leiden, 1998), pp. 17–69. For the Goths, see Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley, 1988).

³³ Samo: Fredegar, *Chronicon*, 4.48, ed. by B. Krusch (Hannover, 1888), MGH SSRM 2:144. See Pohl, *Die Awaren*, pp. 256–61.

travel to the Slavs to preach the gospel, an angel appeared in his dream with a map of the world and said: “You see that this whole part of the world should remain desolate.” [. . .] Thus he [i.e. Columbanus] realized that this people had not become ready for faith.³⁴ Only gradually, closer centre-periphery relations resumed between Byzantium and the *Sklaviniai* in the seventh-century Balkans, between Bavarians and Carantanians in the later eighth century, between Franks and Moravians, Bohemians, and many other specific Slavic peoples in the ninth century.

Many of the boundaries discussed in this volume are imperial frontiers of some sort, deep zones of expansion or control whose inhabitants, however rebellious they might occasionally be, moved within the orbit of a supraregional power. Such asymmetrical relationships influenced both parties. Frederick J. Turner’s much-discussed model, first presented in 1893, assumed that the European immigrants in the United States of America had only truly become Americans through the experience of the frontier and the appropriation of the wilderness beyond.³⁵ Perhaps the experience of the Roman *limes* or the Frankish and Saxon encounters with the Elbe Slavs had their effects on the late antique and early medieval mentalities of empire, too. But no doubt what lay behind these frontiers was not, as Turner had so neatly pictured the American West, a pristine wilderness waiting for civilization. Many contributions in this volume demonstrate that both sides of the border were not so different after all. Especially in the largely civil societies of late Rome and early Byzantium, the frontiers provided opportunities for ambitious warlords of Roman or barbarian origin to accumulate military potential and create expandable positions of power. Military manpower was cheap in the swamps and woodlands east of the Rhine or north of the Danube where the benefits of Roman civilization had only trickled down insufficiently (as the archaeological evidence presented in this volume by Sebastian Brather and Eugen Teodor seems to indicate). And the forces accumulated to prevent barbarian invasions provided an unrivalled potential to negotiate or grab power in the heartland of the Empire. Ambitious barbarian warlords could also pursue their own agenda in this environment. Whether the Slavic raiders on the Danube in the sixth century or on the Elbe in the tenth, whether Hospitallers or Karamanids in Cilicia in the thirteenth, they all exploited the open spaces that frontier zones offered. On a smaller scale, the late antique *scamarae* or the *akritai*, the

³⁴ Ionas, *Vita Columbani* 1.28, ed. B. Krusch (Hannover, 1902), MGH SSRM 4:1–294, p. 104: ‘Cernis quod maneat totus orbis desertus [. . .] Intellexit ergo ille, non esse gentis illius in promptu fidei profectus.’ This was clearly an excuse for Columbanus not embarking on any ambitious missionary project. For the interpretation of the passage, see I. N. Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400–1050* (Harlow, 2001), p. 34.

³⁵ Frederick J. Turner, ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History’, *Annual Report of the American Historical Association* 1893, pp. 199–207, and *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1920). For the ensuing debate, see G. H. Nobles, *American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquests* (Harmondsworth, 1997); *The American Frontier – Opposing Viewpoints*, ed. by M. E. Jones (San Diego, 1994).

'bordermen' between Byzantium and the Caliphate (see the contribution by Ralph-Johannes Lilie), lived their lawless lives out of reach of imperial administration. Of course, empires and kingdoms always strove to keep the forces they had unleashed, the aggressions they had provoked, and those who had fled their rule under control. Both in the landscape and in texts, they sought to delineate borders, create barriers, erect defences, and define friends and foes. The texts that have resulted from this continuous effort to draw lines may give us a misleading impression of clear boundaries and identities. Dikes, walls, barriers, and border stones may often have had a similar function that is, however, less accessible.

Thus, the perception of frontiers and the construction of identities were closely related. Territorial boundaries are only one specific case of social boundaries in which systems perpetuate themselves by a continuous process of inclusion and exclusion.³⁶ This volume provides manifold evidence for the new paradigm in the study of frontiers: boundaries do not 'naturally' exist between peoples and states, between social groups and religious confessions. They tend to fade out and become permeable. Thus, the effort of maintaining boundaries and investing them with ontological significance is an essential part of the construction of communities. This, however, does not mean that early medieval societies were open and fluid and frontiers and communities only 'imagined'. Violent conflict and chauvinism haunted Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages no less than the modern world. Borders and barriers did matter. But they are not an expression of clear, unproblematic categories and identities, but part of the effort to establish appropriate distinctions in a puzzling world.

³⁶ Walter Pohl, 'Soziale Grenzen und Spielräume der Macht', in *Grenze und Differenz*, ed. by Pohl and Reimitz, pp. 11–18.

